

THE BEAUTY SPOT
AND
OTHER STORIES

•ALFRED DE MUSSET•

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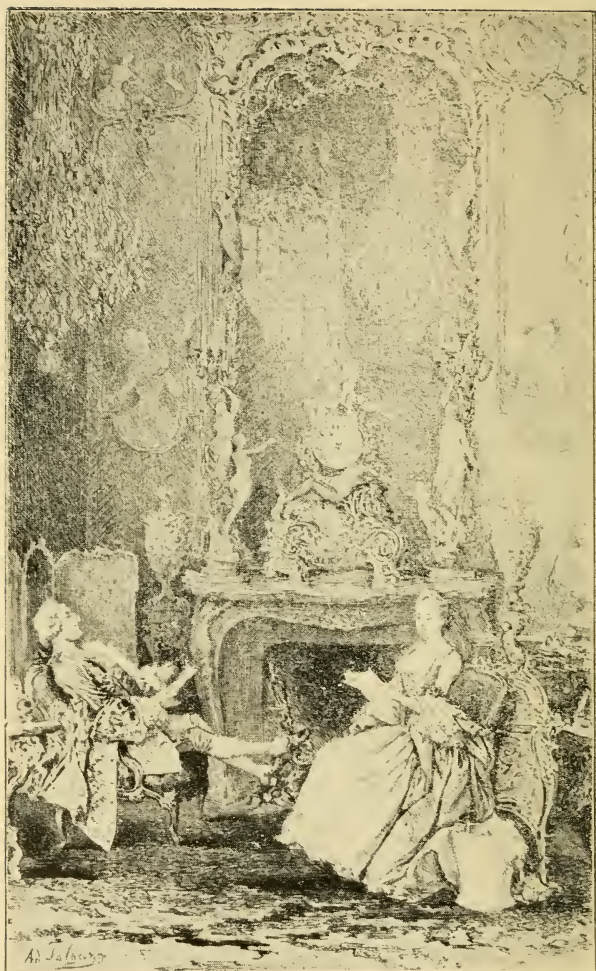


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BY ALFRED DE MUSSET

TRANSLATED BY KENDALL WARREN

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THE BEAUTY SPOT

I

In 1756, when Louis XV., weary of the contentions between the magistracy and the grand council concerning the tax of two sous, decided to hold a *lit de justice*, the members of parliament resigned from office. Sixteen of these resignations were accepted, whereupon there were sixteen exiles. "But I do not understand," said Madame de Pompadour to one of the presidents, "how you can sit still and see a mere handful of men oppose the authority of the King of France. How can you defend your course? Throw aside your official robe, *mon-sieur le president*, and you will see things as I see them."

But the exiles did not suffer alone; their relatives and friends also felt the effects of their opposition. The king was amused. For diversion he had his favorite read all the royal mail that might be curious or entertaining. It was well understood that, under pretext of act-

ing as his own secret police, he was amusing himself with the thousand intrigues that were going on under his eyes; but whoever, far or near, held to the leaders of the factions, was almost always punished. Everyone knows that Louis XV., with all his weakness, had one element of strength: he was inexorable.

One evening as he sat before the fire with his feet resting against the mantel, gloomy as ever, the marchioness, glancing over a bundle of letters, shrugged her shoulders and began to laugh. The king inquired the cause of her merriment.

"I have found here a letter which is very absurd and yet it is touching, indeed pathetic."

"What is the name?" asked the king.

"There is no name; it is a love letter."

"To whom is it addressed?"

"That is the absurd part of it. It is addressed to Mademoiselle d'Annebault, the niece of my good friend, Madame d'Estrades. Apparently these letters have been sent her in order that I may see them."

"What is the letter about?"

"Why, I told you it was about love. It also concerns de Vauvert and de Neauflette. Are they gentlemen? Does your majesty know them?"

The king prided himself on knowing France by heart, that is to say the nobility of France.

The etiquette of his court, which he had studied, was not more familiar to him than the heraldry of his kingdom; slight as was this knowledge, the rest did not count. But he was proud of it and the hierarchy was in his eyes like the marble stairway of his palace; he liked to walk upon it as master. After a moment's revery he frowned, then, signaling the marchioness to read, he threw himself into his easy-chair, saying with smile:

"Go on, the girl is pretty."

Madame Pompadour, in tones of gentle mockery, began to read a long letter filled with amorous protestations:

"Just see how the fates pursue me!" the letter began. "Everything seemed to promise the fulfillment of my vows, and you yourself, my gentle friend, have you not led me to hope for happiness? And yet I must renounce it and for a fault I have never committed. Was it not the refinement of cruelty to permit me to see heaven opening before me and then thrust me into the abyss? When a wretch is doomed to death should he be tortured by the promise of all that could make him cling to life? Such however, is my fate; I have no other asylum, no other hope than the tomb, for, while I am unhappy I ought no longer to think of your hand. When fortune smiled upon me, my only thought was of you; poor as I am to-day I can not longer aspire to the happiness of calling you mine, and, as I can not make you happy,

although dying of love, I forbid you to love me—"

The marchioness smiled at these last words.

"Madam," said the king, "there is an honest man. But what is it that prevents him from marrying his mistress?"

"Allow me to continue, Sire."

"This injustice which overwhelms me, surprises me, coming as it does from the best of kings. You know that my father applied for my appointment to the cornetcy or ensign of the guards, and that that place would have determined the course of my entire future since it would have enabled me to offer myself to you. The Duke de Biron proposed my name, but the king has rejected it in a manner that leaves me no ground for hope; ought I to suffer forever because my father can not see things with the king's eyes? My devotion to the king is as sincere as my love for you. I am ready to draw my sword in defense of either sentiment. It is discouraging to have my request refused; but the fact that I am disgraced without just cause is opposed to the well-known clemency of His Majesty—"

"Indeed!" said the king, "that is interesting."

"If you knew how sad we are! Ah! my friend, this land of Neauflette, this pavilion of Vauvert, these pleasant groves! I walk through them alone day by day. I have forbidden the gardener to touch it. He shall not disturb the gravel on the walks your feet have trod. I can still see the marks of your little heels and your white toes; they seem to walk before me while

I follow your beautiful image and the charming phantom at times affects me as though it were the living form. It was there, in our sweet converse as we walked over the grassy sward, that it was given me to know you, to appreciate you. An admirable education, and the esprit of an angel, the dignity of a queen and the grace of a nymph, thoughts worthy of Leibnitz and expression as simple, the honey of Plato upon the lips of Diana, all that served to enshroud me in the veil of adoration. And all the while the well-beloved flowers were blooming about us. I have breathed their perfume while listening to you; in that perfume your image is embalmed. And now they bow their heads, they speak to me of death—"

"What a doleful fellow," said the king. Why do you read that to me?"

"Because your majesty has ordered it on account of the beautiful eyes of Mademoiselle d'Annebault."

"It is true, she has beautiful eyes."

"And when I return from these solitary walks, I find my father alone in the salon leaning on a table with a lighted candle at his side, in the midst of the faded decorations and worm-eaten furniture. His sorrow increases as he observes mine, my grief aggravates his—Athenais! at one end of that salon stands a harpsichord over whose keys have flitted those delicious fingers that my mouth has touched but once, while yours opened gently in accord with sweetest music, as though your songs were but a smile. How happy are Rameau, Lulli, Duni, and

many others I could mention! Yes, you love them, they are in your memory; their breath has passed over your lips. I, too, seat myself at the harpsichord, I attempt to play one of those airs which are so dear to you; how cold and how monotonous! I stop and listen to the echoes dying away among those dismal arches. My father turns around and sees that I am desolate; what can he do? He sees that I am young, ardent, full of life, asking nothing but a place in the world; he is my father and he can do nothing—"

"One would think that that boy had been hunting and lost his favorite falcon," said the king. "What is it all about?"

"It is very true," replied the marchioness, continuing her reading in a low tone, "it is very true that we are near neighbors and distant relatives of the Abbé Chauvelin—"

"That is enough," said Louis XV., yawning. "Always some nephew with claims or requests. My parliament abuses my kindness, there is too much family."

"But if it is only a distant relative?"

"Good, but that Abbé Chauvelin is a Jansenist; he is a good-natured devil but only half-witted. Throw that letter in the fire and let us hear no more of it."

II

The last words pronounced by the king were not exactly a sentence of death, but they were almost a prohibition of life. In the year 1756 what could a young man who had no fortune, and to whom the king would not listen, do? To try to be a clerk, or a philosopher, a poet perchance, but without dedication and without a profession, would be vain.

Such was not the vocation of Chevalier Vauvert who had just tearfully written the letter at which the king scoffed. Alone with his father in the old chateau of Neauflette he paced the room consumed at once by melancholy and fury.

"I wish to go to Versailles," said he.

"And what will you do there?"

"I do not know; but what can I do here?"

"You can keep me company; it is true that it is not very amusing for you and I do not ask you to stay on my account. But do you forget that your mother is dead?"

"No, sir, I do not forget that I promised her I would consecrate to you the life that you have given me. I will return, but I wish to go; I can not remain longer in this spot."

"Why is that?"

"On account of my love. I am desperately in love with Mademoiselle d'Annebault."

"You know that it is a hopeless attachment. No one but Moliere can make marriages without a dowry. Have you forgotten then, my disgrace?"

"Ah! sir, your disgrace, may I ask, without violating the most profound respect, what is the nature of that disgrace? We are not in parliament. We pay the tax, we do not impose it. If parliament is stingy with the king's money it is not our affair. Why does Abbé Chauvelin drag us down in ruin?"

"Abbé Chauvelin is an honest man. He refuses to approve of the tenth because he is shocked by the extravagance of the court. Nothing of the kind occurred during the life of Madame de Chateauroux. She was beautiful at least, that one, and she did not cost anything, not even her beauty which she gave so generously. She was mistress and sovereign and she was satisfied that the king did not send her off to rot in a dungeon when he withdrew the favor of his good will. But that Etioles, that Le Normand, that insatiable Poisson!"

"And what does it matter?"

"What does it matter? More than you think. Do you know that while he treats us so grudgingly, the fortune of his *grisette* is incalculable? She was first given an income of one hundred and eighty thousand pounds sterling; but that was only a *bagatelle*, that does not count now;

there is no way of estimating the enormous sums of money the king throws at her head; every three months in the year she catches on the wing, as though by chance, five or six hundred thousand pounds, yesterday on salt, to-day on the increase of the appropriation for the royal stables; with the lodgings in all the royal houses she buys la Selle, Crissy, Aulnay, Brimborion, Marigny, Saint-Remy, Bellevue, and many other estates, houses in Paris, at Fontainebleau, at Versailles, at Compiègne; without counting a secret fortune deposited in all the banks of Europe, in the event of probable disgrace or the death of the sovereign. And who pays all that, if you please?"

"I do not know, sir, but it is not I."

"It is you and everybody else, it is the people who sweat blood and water, who cry out in the street, who insult the statue of Pigalle. And parliament wishes to put a stop to it; it is opposed to increased taxation. When it concerned the expenses of war, all our treasure was ready; we did not think of driving a bargain. The victorious king could clearly see that he was beloved by all his people, more clearly still when he came to die. Then all differences were forgotten, all factions quelled, all rancor suppressed; all France knelt before the king's bed and prayed for him. But if we pay without a murmur for his soldiers or his physicians,

we are not willing to pay for his mistresses, and we have something else to do beside support Madame de Pompadour."

"I do not defend her. In fact I do not know whether she is right or wrong; I have never seen her."

"Of course; and you would like to see her so that you could form some opinion. At your age the head judges through the eyes. Try it then, if you choose, but you will be disappointed."

"Why, may I ask?"

"Because it is useless to attempt to see her; that marchioness is as invisible in her little boudoirs at Brimboration as the Grand Turk in his seraglio; because the doors will be closed in your face. What would you do? Attempt the impossible? Seek your fortune as an adventurer?"

"No, but as a lover. I do not intend to beg for pity, but to resent injustice. I have a well-founded hope, almost a promise from M. de Biron; I was on the eve of possessing the object of my love and that love is not unreasonable; you have not disapproved of it. Permit me, then, to plead my cause. Whether I shall have to do with the king or Madame Pompadour, I do not know, but I wish to go."

"You do not know what the court is, and yet you think of presenting yourself there!"

"Yes, and I may be received there all the more readily because I am unknown."

"You unknown, chevalier! Think of it. You bear my name, we are an old family. You will not be unknown."

"Very well, then the king will listen to me!"

"He will do nothing of the kind. You imagine that when your carriage halts within the city that you are in Paris. Suppose that you reach the ante-chamber, the gallery of the *Œil de Boeuf*; between his majesty and you there will always be another door; there will be an abyss. You will turn here and there, you will try expedients, you will look for assistance and you will find none. We are relatives of Chauvelin and how does the king avenge himself? By torture for Damiens, by exile for parliament, but for us others, by a word, or, worse still, by silence. Do you know what that silence of a king is, when, instead of replying to you, he annihilates you with a glance and passes on? Besides the Grève and the Bastile, there is a kind of punishment which, apparently less cruel, makes its mark as does the hand of the executioner. The condemned, it is true, remains at liberty, but he must not think of going near a woman, or a courtesan, or a salon, or an abbey, or a barrack. At his approach everything closes or turns aside, and he thus walks about helplessly enclosed in an invisible prison."

"I shall shake my prison doors so hard that they will let me out."

"No more than another. The son of M. de Meynières was no more guilty than you. He had, as you, promises of advancement, legitimate claims on favor. His father, a most devoted subject of his majesty, the most honest man in his kingdom, repulsed by the king, went, with his gray hairs to beseech not the king, but his mistress. Do you know what reply he received? Here are her own words sent me by M. de Meynières in a letter: 'The king is master; he does not visit his displeasure upon your person; he is content to deprive your son of a career; to punish you otherwise would be to embroil himself with others, and he does not care to do it; his will must be respected. And yet I pity you, I share your sorrow, for I have been a mother; I know what it costs you to see your son deprived of all hope for the future.' That is the kind of creature at whose feet you would kneel!"

"They say they are very pretty feet."

"*Parbleu!* yes. She is not pretty, and the king, as is well known, does not love her. He yields to her, he bows before her will. In order to maintain her strange power over him she must have something besides her wooden head."

"It is claimed that she has so much esprit."

"And no heart, a fine merit!"

"No heart! She, who declaims Voltaire's verses so well, who sings Rousseau's music! Who plays *Alzire* and *Colette*! It is impossible, I will never believe it."

"Go and see her if you wish. I advise it, but I do not order it; you will have your trouble for nothing. Then you are very much in love with that *Demoiselle d'Annebault*?"

"More than with life."

"Then go."

III

It is said that travels do injury to love because they afford distractions; it is also said that they fortify it because they allow it time for dreaming. The chevalier was too young to make wise distinctions. Tiring of the carriage when he had gone half way, he abandoned it for the post and thus arrived toward five in the evening at the *Soleil*, a sign no longer so popular with inns as in the time of Louis XIV.

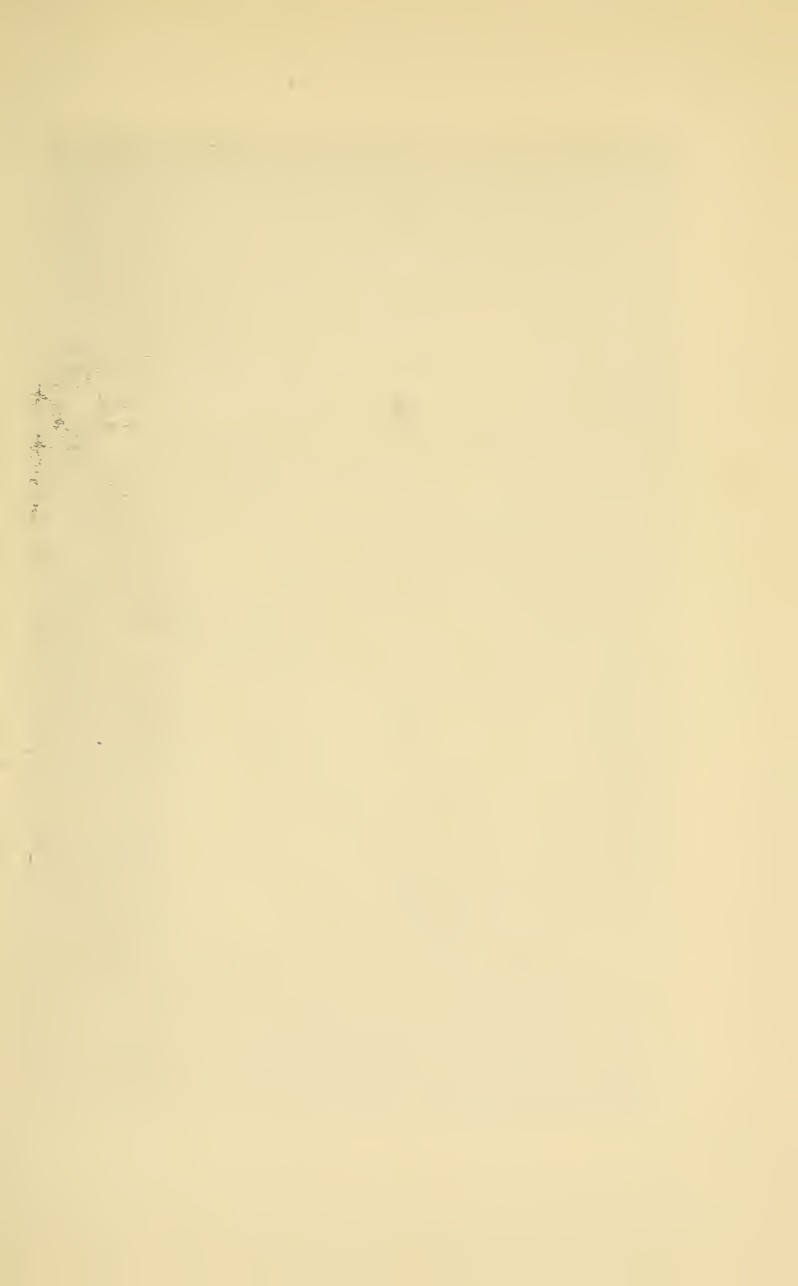
There was at Versailles an old priest who had been curé near *Neauflette*: the chevalier knew him and loved him. This curé, plain and poor, had a nephew with a living, an abbé at

court, who could be useful. The chevalier went to this nephew, a man of importance, who received the newcomer well and did not disdain to listen to his request.

"But, *parbleu!*" said he, "you come at a lucky time. There is to be an opera at court this evening, a kind of fête, I know not what. I am not going because I am sulking with the marchioness in order to obtain a favor; but here is a word from the Duke d'Aumont, that I have asked for some one or other. Go, by all means. It is true you have not yet been presented, but for the performance this evening it is not necessary. When the king passes try to find some spot where he will be sure to see you. A glance from him and your fortune is made."

The chevalier thanked the abbé, and, fatigued by his long journey, he made before his mirror at the inn a careless toilet, such a toilet as satisfies a distracted lover. An inexperienced servant assisted him as best he could, and covered with powder his spangled waistcoat. Thus accoutred he advanced to his fate. He was twenty years of age.

Night was falling when he reached the chateau. He timidly advanced to the railing and asked the way of the sentinel. He was shown a grand stairway. There he learned from the Swiss that the opera had just begun, and the





king, that is to say everybody, was in the hall.*

"If *monsieur le marquis* will cross the court," added the Swiss (thinking he was at least a marquis), "he will find himself at the door of the hall. If he prefers to pass through the apartments—"

The chevalier was not acquainted with the palace. Curiosity at first tempted him to reply that he would go through the apartments; then as a lackey came up to conduct him he added that he did not desire attendance. He therefore advanced alone, not without some trepidation.

Versailles shone resplendent with light. From the first floor to the roof clusters of lights, girandoles, gilded furniture, gleaming marble. All the doors, except those of the queen's apartments, were open. As the chevalier advanced his wonder grew; he was struck with astonishment and admiration; for the wonderful feature of the marvelous spectacle before his eyes was not its beauty nor its splendor, but the complete solitude which surrounded him in that enchanted desert.

Seeing himself alone in a vast enclosure that seemed a temple, a cloister, or a chateau, he

*This was not the hall constructed by Louis XV, or rather by Madame de Pompadour, finished in 1769, and dedicated in 1770, at the marriage of the Duke de Berri (Louis XVI) with Marie Antoinette. The one in question was a sort of portable theatre that could be carried from room to room, or set up in a gallery, according to the custom of Louis XIV.

experienced a feeling of strangeness and of mystery. The vast structure seemed to weigh him down: the walls were looking at him; the echoes were listening to him, the sound of his footsteps broke a silence so profound that he could not repress a feeling of fear mingled with respect.

Such were the chevalier's first impressions, but they soon gave way to curiosity. The glass candelabra in the gallery reflected a thousand lights. No one knows how many loves, how many nymphs and shepherdesses were playing here and there on the paneling, skipping about the ceiling and seeming to enlase the entire palace in one immense garland. Here vast halls with velvet baldachins embroidered with gold, and chairs of state preserving the air of majestic stiffness which characterized the great king; there, luxurious ottomans, easy chairs carelessly disposed about a gaming table; an endless suite of salons all empty, where splendid decorations appeared all the more magnificent because useless; from time to time secret doors opening into mysterious corridors; numberless stairways and passages connected as in a labyrinth; columns, raised platforms large enough for giants; boudoirs as well concealed as the hiding places of children; an enormous canvas of Vanloo near a porphyry chimney; at times oppressive grandeur, again effeminate grace;

and everywhere, in the midst of luxury, of prodigal magnificence and of delicate ease, a thousand intoxicating odors, strange and diverse, perfumes made of a mixture of flowers and women, and enervating warmth, the air of voluptuousness.

To be in such a spot at the age of twenty, in the midst of this scene of wonderful beauty was surely an excuse for bewilderment. The chevalier walked through all this splendor as though in a dream.

"Truly a fairy palace!" he murmured, and in fact there seemed to be realized in his case one of those stories in which wandering princes discover magic castles.

Could it be that mortal creatures inhabited this spot of matchless beauty. Did real women come and sit down in these chairs, and had their gracious contours left light impress on these cushions so full of indolence? Who knows? Perhaps from behind those thick curtains there would appear a princess who had been sleeping a hundred years, a fairy waving blade of grass, an Armide in spangles, or some wood nymph stepping out of a gilded panel!

Bewildered by such fancies as these, the chevalier, in order to dream the better, threw himself on a sofa, and would perhaps have remained there some time if he had not suddenly remembered that he was in love. What was

Mademoiselle d'Annebault doing at this time in her ancestral chateau?

"Athenais!" he cried, springing to his feet, "why am I wasting my time here? Have my senses strayed? *Grand Dieu!* where am I? And who is this who pretends to be I?"

He continued his journey through strange scenes, and, it is needless to say, soon lost himself. He caught sight of two or three lackeys conversing in low tones at the farther end of a hall. He approached them and inquired the way.

"If *monsieur le marquis*," they replied (always according to the same formula), "will take the trouble to descend that stairway and follow the gallery on the right, he will find, at the end, three steps; he will then turn to the left, and when he shall have crossed the salon of Diana, that of Apollo, that of the Muses and that of Spring, then descend six steps more, then, passing to the left of the *salle des gardes*, on the way to the *escalier des ministres*, he will surely find other ushers who will direct him to his destination."

"I am obliged to you," said the chevalier, "and if I do not find my way it will not be for the lack of explicit directions."

He resumed his course with new courage, stopping every few steps to look about him, then, remembering his love, hastening forward

again ; thus, at the end of a quarter of an hour he found the ushers to whom he had been directed.

"*M. le marquis* has made a mistake," they said to him, "he should have followed the passage leading into the other wing of the chateau ; but it is an easy matter to return to it. Monsieur has only to descend that stairway, pass through the salon of the Nymphs, that of Summer,"—

"Thank you," interrupted the chevalier.

"How stupid," he said to himself, "to question these people. I have my pains for nothing and I believe they are poking fun at me with their pompous names of salons that I know nothing about."

He decided to go straight ahead as far as he could.

"For after all," he continued, "this palace is very beautiful, it is very large, but it must have its limits, and I will find the end if it is as long as our rabbit warren."

But at Versailles it is not an easy matter to go straight ahead, and the rustic comparison of a royal dwelling to a rabbit warren must have displeased the nymphs, for they did their best to lead the poor lover astray, and, doubtless in order to punish him, they took pleasure in making him turn and return on his steps, bringing back continually to the same place, like a countryman entangled in the brush ; it was thus

they surrounded him with a maze of marble and of gold.

In the "Antiquities of Rome" of Piranesi there is a series of engravings that the artist calls his "Dreams," and which are the representation of his own visions during the delirium of fever. These engravings represent vast gothic halls; on the stone floor, all sorts of engines, machines, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults etc., etc., the expression of enormous power in action and of tremendous resistance. Along the walls you see a staircase and on the staircase Piranesi himself painfully toiling upward. Follow his steps a little higher; they suddenly halt before an abyss. Whatever may become of poor Piranesi you feel that he has reached the end of his work for he can not make a step without falling; but raise your eyes and you will see a second staircase rising into the air, and on that staircase also, you see Piranesi on the brink of another precipice. Look still higher and another flight more aerial than the last, mounts into space, and poor Piranesi still climbing, and thus up until the eternal staircase and Piranesi disappear together in the clouds, that is to say at the edge of the engraving.

That feverish allegory well represents the weariness of useless effort and the kind of vertigo that results from impatience. The cheva-

lier, after passing from room to room, from gallery to gallery, experienced something like wrath.

"*Parbleu!*" said he, "but this is cruel. After having been so charmed, so delighted, so enthused, at finding myself alone in this cursed palace, I find that I can not get out! A plague on the idea that led me to enter this place like Prince Fanfarinet with his boots of solid gold, instead of ordering the first lackey I met to conduct me to the opera!"

When he began to feel these tardy regrets, the chevalier was, like Piranesi, half way up a flight of stairs, on a landing, between three doors. Beyond the central door he seemed to hear a gentle murmur, so sweet, so voluptuous, so to speak, that he could not help listening to it. At the very moment he was timidly advancing in order to lend indiscreet attention, the door suddenly opened on its hinges. A breath of air embalmed in a thousand perfumes, a torrent of light that made the mirrored gallery pale, struck him so suddenly that he recoiled before it.

"Does *monsieur le marquis* wish to enter?" inquired the usher who had opened the door.

"I wish to attend the performance," replied the chevalier.

"It has just this moment ceased."

At the same time beautiful ladies delicately

tinted with white and carmine, giving not the arm, nor even the hand, but the tip of the finger to old and young courtiers, began to file out of the hall, taking special care to walk in profile for the greater safety of their skirts. All that brilliant assembly spoke in low tones of subdued gayety mingled with fear and respect.

"What is all this?" inquired the chevalier, not suspecting that chance had conducted him to the spot he had been seeking.

"The king is about to pass," replied the usher.

There is a sort of intrepidity that fears nothing: it is the courage of ignorance. Our young provincial, although reasonably brave, did not possess that faculty. At the words "the king is about to pass," he stood motionless, almost frightened.

King Louis XV., who could ride with the hounds a dozen leagues without fatigue, was, as is well known, royally nonchalant. He boasted, and not without reason, that he was the first gentleman of France, and his mistresses told him, not without cause, that he was the best made and the most beautiful. It was an event merely to see him rise from his easy-chair and deign to walk alone. While he was crossing the foyer with his arm resting upon, or rather extended over the shoulder of M. d'Argenson, while his red heel glided over the inlaid floor (he had introduced that style in

walking) all whispering ceased; the courtiers bowed their heads, not daring to make an actual salute, and the ladies, gently gathering their dresses with their immense furbelows back against their fiery red garters, hazarded that coquettish *bonsoir* that our grandmothers called a reverence and that, in our time, has been replaced by the brutal hand shake of the English.

But the king cared for none of these things, and saw only what it pleased him to see. Alfieri in his *Memoirs*, thus describes his presentation at Versailles:

"I knew that the king never spoke to strangers unless there was something striking about them, but I did not know what to make of the impassive manner and supercilious bearing of Louis XV. He eyes the man who is presented to him from head to foot and seems to receive no impression from the interview. And yet it seems to me that if some one should say to a giant: 'Here is a little ant that I wish to show you,' that giant would look at it, would smile, or perhaps would say: 'What an interesting little animal!'"

The taciturn monarch passed along through these flowers, these beautiful women, all the court, alone in that brilliant throng. It did not take the chevalier long to decide that he had nothing to hope for from the king and that the

recital of the story of his love would make little impression here.

"Wretch that I am!" he thought, "my father was right when he told me that at two paces from the king I would find a gulf fixed between him and me. Even if I should make so bold as to demand an audience, who would protect me? Who would present me? There is that absolute master who can change my destiny with a word, assure my future and gratify my fondest hopes. He is there before me; if I should stretch out my hand I could touch his apparel—and I feel farther removed from him than if I were in the farthest province! How can I speak to him? How can I approach him? Who will come to my aid?"

While the chevalier agonized thus, he saw enter the foyer a rather pretty young lady, full of grace and finesse; she was simply clad, a white dress without either embroidery or diamonds, a rose in her hair. She gave her hand to a gentleman *tout a l'ambres*, as Voltaire says—and conversed with him in a low tone behind her fan. As chance would have it, either in talking, or laughing, or making some gesture, the fan slipped from her hand and fell under a chair directly in front of the chevalier. He hastened to pick it up, and, as in order to reach it, he had been obliged to kneel on the floor, the young lady appeared so charming that he

kept that attitude in returning the fan. She stopped, smiled and passed on, thanking him with a slight inclination of the head; but at the glance she darted at the chevalier, he felt his heart beat, although he knew not why. And well it might beat, for that young woman was the little Etioles, as the envious still called her, while others, in speaking of her, said "la marquise" as one would say "la reine."

IV

"She will be my patron, she will come to my aid! Ah! the abbé was right when he said that a glance would decide my life! Yes, those eyes so fine and so sweet, that little mouth so roguish and so delicious, that little foot drowned in finery—she is my good fairy!"

Thus thought the chevalier, almost aloud, as he returned to his inn. Whence came that sudden hope? Was it his youth or had the eyes of the marchioness spoken?

But the difficulty remained. If he no longer dreamed of being presented to the king, who would present him to the marchioness?

He passed the greater part of the night writing to Mademoiselle d'Annebault such a letter as the one Madam Pompadour had read.

To reproduce that letter would be folly. Only

fools and lovers can repeat the same thing over and over and continue to take delight in it.

In the morning the chevalier went out and walked dreamily up and down the streets. He did not think of having recourse to the abbé for farther assistance and it is not an easy matter to tell the reason. It was as a mingling of fear and audacity, of false shame and romance. And then, what reply could he have made the abbé, if he had told him the story of the evening before? "You had an opportunity to pick up a fan. Did you profit by it? What did you say to the marchioness?" "Nothing." "You should have spoken to her." "I was embarrassed. I lost my head." "That was wrong, you should have made the most of the occasion; but that may be repaired. Do you wish me to present you to so-and so, one of my friends? To Madam such-an-one? Perhaps that would be better. We will try to give you an opportunity to redeem yourself, etc., etc."

The chevalier wanted nothing of that kind. It seemed to him that it would spoil and de-flower his story. He told himself that chance had done an unusual thing, an incredible thing for him, and that it ought to be kept as a secret between him and fortune; to tell it to the first comer would be to cheapen it and show himself unworthy of it.

"I went alone to the chateau," he said to

himself, "and I will go alone to Trianon," (at that time the residence of the favorite).

Such a course may, in fact must, appear wild and unreasonable to those calculating spirits who neglect nothing and leave nothing to chance; but the coldest people, if they have ever been young (and it is not everyone who has been young even in the time of youth), have known that strange sentiment, at once timid and bold, dangerous and seductive, which drags us to our fate: one feels blind and wishes to be; one knows nothing about the path, and yet one walks on. There is a charm in that carelessness and even in that ignorance; it is the pleasure of the artist who dreams, of the lover who passes the night under his mistress' window; it is the instinct of the soldier; it is especially that of the gambler.

So the chevalier, scarcely knowing what he was doing, set out for Trianon. Although not dressed in the height of the fashion, he did not lack in elegance nor in that style of conducting himself which would make a lackey hesitate about questioning him. He had no difficulty, thanks to the directions given him at the inn, in finding his way to the chateau, if such may be termed that marble bonbon box which was to be the scene of so many pleasures and so many sorrows. Unfortunately the gate was closed, and a large Swiss with a heavy coat

was pacing up and down, his hands behind his back as though he was expecting no one.

"The king is here!" said the chevalier to himself, "or the marchioness is not here. It is evident that when the gates are closed and none but soldiers can be seen, the masters are either shut up in the house or have gone away."

What should he do? In proportion as he had just felt confident and brave, he now experienced anxiety and disappointment. The mere thought, "The king is here!" frightened him more than the words he had heard the evening before: "The king is about to pass!" For then he did not know what to expect and now he had seen that cold glance, that impassive majesty.

"Ah! *Bon Dieu!* what face shall I put on if I foolishly enter that garden and find myself face to face with that superb monarch, taking his coffee on the banks of a stream?"

Immediately there arose before the eyes of the poor lover the forbidding outlines of the Bastille; instead of the charming image of the passing marchioness he saw chains and dungeon keeps, black bread and questionable water; he knew the history of Latude. Little by little reflection came, and little by little hope fled.

"And yet," he continued, "I am doing no harm, nor has the king harmed me. I protest against injustice but I mention no names. I

was so well received at Versailles and the lackeys were so polite! What have I to fear? Making a mistake? I will make others and repair them."

He approached the gate and touched it with his finger; it yielded. He opened it and resolutely entered. The Swiss turned about with an air of annoyance:

"What do you want? Where are you going?"

"I am going to see Madam de Pompadour."

"Have you an audience?"

"Yes."

"Where is your letter?"

He was no longer the marquis of the evening before and this time there was no Duke d'Aumont. The chevalier glanced down at his white stockings and the buckles on his shoes which were covered with dust. He had made a mistake in coming on foot in a country where no one walks. The Swiss also glanced down and eyed him not from head to foot, but from foot to head. The coat appeared to be proper but the hat was not just right and the hair was not powdered.

"You have no letter. What do you want?"

"I wish to speak to Madam de Pompadour."

"Indeed! And you think this is the way to go about it?"

"I do not know. Is the king here?"

"Perhaps. Go away, I do not care to be disturbed."

The chevalier preferred not to give way to anger but such insolence made him turn pale.

"I have sometimes ordered lackeys to do this or that, but no lackey has ever dared to give me orders!"

"Lackey! I? A lackey!" shouted the Swiss in a fury.

"Lackey, porter, valet or scullion I care nothing which, and it matters little."

The Swiss turned on the chevalier, his fists clenched, his face burning with anger. The chevalier, called to his senses by the appearance of danger, lightly raised the hilt of his sword.

"Take care," he said, "I am a gentleman and it costs something to bury such a rustic as you."

"If you are a gentleman, I belong to the king, and am only doing my duty—"

At this moment the sound of a fanfare that seemed to come from the forest of Satory, was heard in the distance and died away in echoes. The chevalier allowed his sword to slip back in its scabbard.

"Ah! morbleu!" said he, "it is the king setting out for the chase. Why did you not tell me of this at once?"

"It did not concern me, nor you either."

"Listen to me, my dear friend, the king has gone, I have no letter, I have no audience.

Here is something for your trouble ; allow me to enter."

He drew from his pocket some pieces of gold. The Swiss eyed him again with sovereign contempt.

"What do you mean by that?" said he with disdain. "Is it thus one seeks admission to a royal dwelling? Instead of driving you out, take care lest I shut you up."

"You double rascal!" said the chevalier resuming his anger and reaching again for his sword.

But during this conversation, in which the writer regrets having compromised his hero, thick clouds had darkened the sky ; a storm was gathering. A rapid flash, a loud stroke of thunder and the rain began to patter on the ground about them. The chevalier, still holding his gold in his hand, saw a large drop of water fall on his dusty shoe.

"A plague on it!" said he, "let us seek shelter. If it will rain it can't be helped."

He slowly advanced toward the cave of Cerberus, or if you prefer, the porter's lodge ; there he dropped without ceremony into the porter's easy-chair.

"Gods! how you annoy me!" said he. "You take me for a conspirator and you do not know that I have in my pocket a petition for his

majesty! I am from the provinces but you are only a fool."

For reply the Swiss went to a corner and picked up his halberd, and stood thus, with his weapon in his hand.

"When will you go?" he shouted in stentorian tones.

The quarrel which had been forgotten and resumed, seemed about to become serious, for the enormous hands of the Swiss were trembling on his halberd; what was about to happen I do not know, when the chevalier suddenly turned his head and exclaimed:

"Ah! who comes there?"

A young page mounted on a superb horse (not English; in that time thin legs were not in vogue), came riding up at full gallop. The drive was drenched with rain; the gate was only partially open. There was a moment's hesitation; the Swiss advanced and opened the gate. The page gave his horse the spurs; the horse stopped an instant, tried to start forward, lost his footing, slipped and fell on the wet roadway.

It is not an easy task, it is sometimes dangerous, to attempt to raise a fallen horse. There is nothing to do but use the whip. The gesticulation of the animal's feet is very disagreeable, especially when one has a leg caught under the saddle.

The chevalier, however, hastened to render assistance without reflecting on dangers, and he went about raising the horse with so much skill that he soon extricated the unfortunate rider. But the latter was covered with mud, and could scarcely limp along on one leg. When he had been half led and half carried to the porter's lodge, he was placed in the easy-chair.

"Sir," said he to the chevalier, "you are a gentleman, I am sure of it. You have done me a great service, but you can do me a still greater one, if you will. Here is a message from the king for the marchioness, and it is very important as you may see from the fact that my horse and I, in order to deliver it the more speedily, have almost broken our necks. You understand that, in my present condition, I can not deliver this message. I would have to be carried myself in order to do so. Will you go in my place?"

At the same time he drew from his pocket a large envelope, decorated with arabesques, stamped with the royal seal.

"Very willingly," replied the chevalier, taking the envelope. And then, feeling as light as a feather, he set out at full speed, running on the tips of his toes.

CHAPTER V

When the chevalier reached the chateau he found a Swiss standing before the door.

"By order of the king!" said the young man who was no longer afraid of halberds; and, showing his letter, he gaily entered the hall passing through a double file of lackeys.

A chief usher, planted in the middle of the hall, seeing the royal seal, bowed gravely, like a poplar bent by the wind, then, with one of his bony fingers, touched the edge of the wainscoating.

A little swinging door, concealed by curtains, immediately opened as though of its own accord. The man with the bony fingers made the chevalier a sign to enter; he did so and the curtain fell gently into place behind him.

A silent *valet de chambre* then introduced him into a salon, then into a corridor, from which opened three smaller rooms, then finally into a second salon, and begged him wait a moment.

"Am I still in the chateau at Versailles?" the chevalier mused. "Are they about to play another game of hide and seek with me?"

Trianon was not at that period either what it is to-day nor what it had been. It has been said that Madam de Maintenon had made an oratory of Versailles, and Madam de Pompadour a boudoir. It was also said of Trianon that

that little porcelain chateau was the boudoir of Madam de Montespan. To whomsoever those boudoirs belonged, Louis XV. seemed to have placed them everywhere. Such and such a room where his ancestors were wont to stretch their royal limbs, he had divided into a number of smaller compartments. They were in every conceivable color; the king went fluttering about these retreats of silk and velvet. "Do you find my little furnished apartment to your taste?" he one day inquired of the beautiful Countess de Seran. "No," said she, "I would prefer blue." As blue was the king's color the reply flattered him. The next time she came, Madam de Seran found the salon furnished in blue.

The one in which the chevalier found himself at this moment was neither blue, nor white, nor red, but all glass. In this room a pretty woman could contrive to repeat her image under many different aspects. She could dazzle, she could surround, so to speak, him whom she wished to please. Wherever he might turn his glance, he would see her; how could he avoid her? He had no recourse but flight or unconditional surrender.

The chevalier looked out at the garden. There, beyond the elms and the labyrinthine hedge, the statues and the marble vases, began to dawn that pastoral taste which the marchioness was

to bring in vogue, and which, later on, Madam Dubarry and Queen Marie Antoinette were to carry to such a high degree of perfection. Already there could be seen rural fantasies which served as a refuge for blasé caprice. Already bloated Tritons, demure goddesses, and learned nymphs; busts with immense peruques, frozen with horror in their verdant niches, saw springing from the earth an English garden in the midst of the astonished yews. Little grassplots, little streams, little bridges were about to dethrone Olympus in order to replace it by a dairy, strange parody of nature that the English copied without understanding it; a veritable child's game became the pastime of an indolent master, who did not know how to dispel the tedium of Versailles even in Versailles itself.

But the chevalier was too much charmed, too delighted to find himself there to make any critical reflections on what he saw. He was, on the contrary, willing to admire everything, and he did admire, turning his message over and over in his hand as does a provincial his hat, when a pretty chamber-maid opened the door and sweetly said:

"Come in, monsieur."

He followed her, and after passing through other corridors more or less mysterious, was ushered into a large room, the blinds of which

were half closed. There his guide stopped and appeared to listen.

"Some more hide and seek," mused the chevalier.

However, at the end of a few moments, another door opened and another servant who seemed to be as pretty as the first, repeated the same words in the same tone:

"Come in, monsieur."

If he had been affected by Versailles he was much more so now and in a different manner, for he realized that he was standing on the sill of a temple inhabited by a goddess. He advanced with palpitating heart; a subdued light, veiled by gauze curtains, succeeded the obscurity through which he had passed; a delicious, almost imperceptible, perfume filled the air about him; the girl stepped timidly aside, and, at the farther end of the room he spied the woman whose fan he had returned, the all-powerful marchioness.

She was alone, seated before a table, clad in a dressing-gown, supporting her head on her hand, apparently deeply preoccupied. Upon seeing the chevalier enter she arose suddenly, almost mechanically.

"You come from the king?"

The chevalier might have replied but he could think of nothing better than a profound bow, at the same time presenting the letter he

bore. She took it, or rather she seized it eagerly. While unsealing it her hands trembled on the envelope.

That letter, written in the king's own hand, was rather long. She first devoured it, so to speak, with a glance, then she read it eagerly with profound attention, her brows contracted, her lips compressed. She was not beautiful thus, and no longer resembled the magic apparition of the little foyer. When she had finished she seemed to reflect. Then her face, which had been pale, began to redden (at that hour it was free from rouge); not only grace returned but a flash of true beauty passed over her delicate features; her cheeks might have been mistaken for two leaves of a rose. She heaved a gentle sigh, dropped the letter on the table and turned toward the chevalier.

"I have made you wait, monsieur," she said with a most charming smile, "because I had not yet arisen, and have not yet completed my toilet, as you can see. That is why I was compelled to have you come in this round-about way; for I am besieged here almost as much as at Versailles. I wish to send a word to the king in reply. Would it be too much trouble for you to deliver it for me?"

This time it was necessary to speak; the chevalier had had time to recover his wits.

"Alas! madam," said he sadly, "you do me

great honor; but, unfortunately, I can not profit by it."

"Why not?"

"I have not the honor to belong to his majesty's court."

"Then how do you happen to be here?"

"By chance. I happened to encounter a page who had been thrown from his horse and who begged me,—"

"What, thrown from his horse!" repeated the marchioness bursting out laughing. (She seemed so happy at that moment, that laughter came easily to her lips).

"Yes, madam, he fell from his horse at the gate. I found him there, fortunately, and assisted him to his feet, and as his clothing was ruined, he begged me to deliver this message."

"And how did you happen to be there?"

"Madam, because I have a petition to present to his majesty."

"His majesty lives at Versailles."

"Yes, but you live here."

"Indeed! That is, you wish me to undertake a commission."

"Madam, I beg you will believe—"

"Do not be frightened, you are not the first. But why do you address yourself to me? I am only a woman—like other women."

In pronouncing these words with an air of

mockery, the marchioness threw a triumphant glance on the letter she had just read.

"Madam," rejoined the chevalier, "I have always believed that man exercises power and woman—"

"Dispenses it. Very well, monsieur, but there is a Queen of France."

"I know it, madam, and that is why I happened to be *there* this morning."

The marchioness was well accustomed to such compliments, although they were generally made in a low voice; but in the present case she seemed singularly pleased.

"And on what hope, on what assurance did you rely to bring you here? For you could not count, I imagine, on the falling of a horse."

"Madam, I believed—I hoped—"

"What did you hope?"

"I hoped that chance—would intervene—"

"Always chance! It appears that chance is a friend of yours, but I warn you that if you have no other, you come sadly recommended."

Perhaps offended fortune was about to avenge itself; but the chevalier, more and more disturbed by these last questions suddenly spied, on the table before him, the same fan he had picked up the evening before. He took it, and, as the evening before, he handed it to the marchioness on bended knee.

"Here, madam," said he, "is the only friend I have here."

The marchioness appeared astonished at first, hesitated a moment, looked at the fan, then at the chevalier.

"Ah! you are right," said she finally; "it is you, monsieur! I recognize you. It was you I saw yesterday at Versailles, with M. de Richelieu. I dropped that fan and you happened to be *there*, as you say."

"Yes, madam."

"And very gallantly, in truth, you handed me my fan; I did not thank you at the time, but I have always been persuaded that he who can gracefully return a fan, can also take up a gauntlet; and we like that, we others."

"And that is very true, madam, for just now I nearly had a duel with the Swiss."

"Heavens!" cried the marchioness, becoming merry again, "with the Swiss! And why?"

"He refused to allow me to enter."

"That was a pity. But, monsieur, who are you? What is your request?"

"Madam, my name is Chevalier de Vauvert. M. de Biron has requested for me the appointment of cornet in the guards."

"Oh! yes, I remember. You come from Neauflette, you are in love with Mademoiselle d'Annebault."

"Madam, who has told you this?"

"O! I warn you that I am to be feared. When memory fails me, I guess. You are related to Abbè Chauvelin, and refused on that account. Am I not right? Where is your petition?"

"Here it is, madam; but, in truth, I can not understand—"

"Why should you try? Arise and place your paper on that table. I shall reply to the king; you will deliver to him my letter and your request."

"But, madam, I believe I have already told you that—"

"You will go. You have come here by order of the king, have you not? Very well, you return by order of the Marchioness of Pompadour, Lady of the Queen's Palace."

The chevalier bowed his head without a word, surprised at what he heard. Everyone knew how many parleys, how much intriguing, the favorite had resorted to, and what persistence she had shown, in order to obtain that title, which, in fact, brought her nothing except a cruel affront from the Dauphin. But for ten years she had been working for it; she desired it and she had secured it. M. de Vauvert, whom she did not know, although she knew the story of his love, pleased her as the bearer of good news.

Standing motionless behind her, the chevalier watched the marchioness write, at first eagerly,

passionately, then reflectively, stopping and passing her hand over her little nose, fine as amber. She was becoming impatient, a witness embarrassed her. At last she reached a decision and made an erasure; it must be confessed that it was an error she corrected.

Facing the chevalier, beyond the table, shone a beautiful Venetian mirror. The timid messenger hardly dared raise his eyes. It was difficult, however, for him to avoid seeing reflected in the mirror, besides the head of the marchioness, the disturbed yet charming face of the new Lady of the Palace.

"How pretty she is!" thought he. "It is too bad that I love another; but Athenais is more beautiful, and then that would be such frightful disloyalty on my part—"

"What were you saying?" inquired the marchioness. (The chevalier, as was his habit, had been talking aloud without knowing it).

"What were you saying?"

"I, madam? I await your pleasure."

"Now it is ready," replied the marchioness, picking up another leaf of paper; but in turning about, her dressing-gown slipped down on her shoulder.

Fashion is a strange thing. Our grandmothers thought nothing of going to court in immense dresses that left their bosoms almost entirely exposed, and it was not considered indecent;

but they as carefully concealed their backs as the ladies at the opera now display them. It is a newly discovered beauty.

On Madam de Pompadour's delicate, white shoulder there was a little black spot that resembled a fly fallen in milk. The chevalier, serious as any dunce who is anxious to bear his part well, looked at that spot, and the marchioness, holding her pen in the air, looked at the chevalier in the glass.

The meaning of those rapidly exchanged glances was, on one side, "You are charming," and on the other, "I am not angry."

However, the marchioness readjusted her dressing-gown.

"You were looking at my beauty spot, monsieur?"

"I was not looking, madam ; I saw and I admired."

"Here is the letter, take it to the king with your petition."

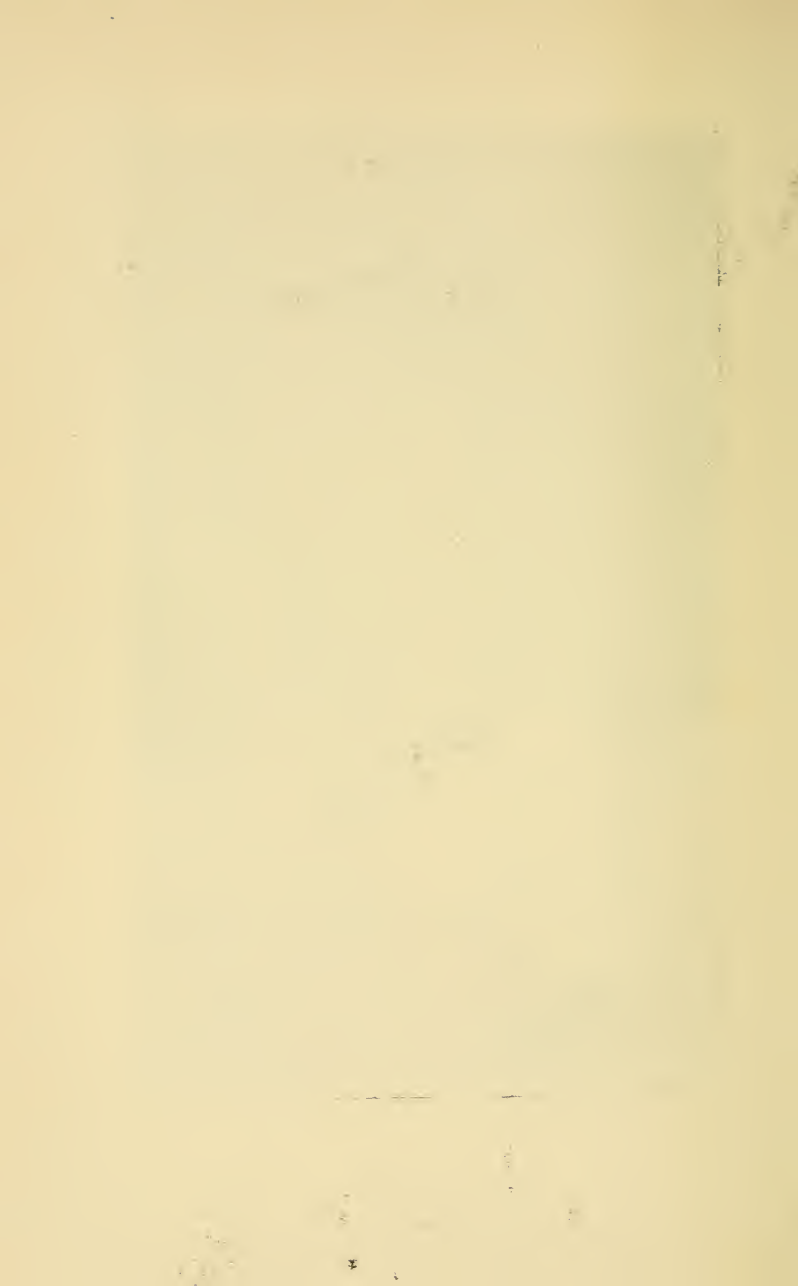
"But, madam—"

"What is it?"

"His Majesty is hunting ; I have just heard his horns in the forest of a Satory."

"It is true, I had not thought of that ; very well, to-morrow, the day after, it matters little—No, at once. Go, give this to Lebel. Adieu, monsieur. Try to remember that beauty spot you have just seen, for no one else in all





this kingdom has seen it but you and the king ; and as for your friend chance, tell him, I beg of you, that it is not best to speak of what has happened here. Adieu, chevalier."

She struck a little bell, then, drawing back the mass of lace on her sleeve as far as her elbow, she extended to the young man her bare arm.

He bowed and with the tip of his lips he barely touched of the marchioness' rosy nails. She saw no impoliteness in this, but rather too much modesty.

The little maids reappeared and behind them, standing like a belfry in the midst of a flock of sheep, the bony man, still smiling, pointed out the way.

VI

Alone, plunged in an old easy-chair in his room at the Soleil, the chevalier waited all day, then another and another—still no news.

"Singular woman! gentle and imperious, good and bad, the most frivolous and the most wayward of women!—She has forgotten me. Oh! misery! She can do everything and I am nothing."

He arose and paced up and down the room.

"Nothing! no I am only a poor devil and can

do nothing. How true were my father's words! The marchioness has been mocking me; it is all very plain—while I was looking at her, it was her beauty that pleased her. She was quite content to see in that mirror and in my eyes the reflection of those charms which, upon my faith, are truly incomparable! Yes, her eyes are small, but what grace! and Latour, like Diderot, has painted her portrait with the dust from a butterfly's wing. She is not large but her form is well made—Ah! Mademoiselle d'Annebault! Ah! my dear one! Is it possible that I too, forget!"

Two or three slight taps at the door roused him from his dejection.

"Who is there?"

The bony man clad all in black with a fine pair of silk stockings, which looked like wandering spindles, entered and made a profound bow.

"There is this evening, Monsieur le Chevalier, a mask ball at court, and madam the marchioness, has sent me to tell you that you are invited."

"That is sufficient, thank you."

When the bony man had retired, the chevalier immediately rang for a servant; the same one who, three days before, had assisted him to prepare for his first visit, now did his best to attire him for the second.

After which the young man made his way to the palace, invited this time, more at ease and yet less bold than when he made the first step into the unknown.

VII

Almost as much dazzled by all the splendors of Versailles as on the occasion of his first visit the chevalier walked about through the brilliantly lighted rooms, wondering why he was there; no one seemed to think of addressing him. At the end of an hour he began to grow weary and think of taking his leave, when two masks, exactly alike, beckoned to him from a divan. One of them took aim at him with her finger as though it had been a pistol; the other arose and stepped up to him.

"It appears," said she, coolly taking him by the arm, "that you are on very good terms with our marchioness."

"I beg your pardon, madam, but of whom do you speak?"

"You know very well."

"I have no idea."

"O! yes."

"None at all."

"All the court knows it?"

"I do not belong to the court."

"You act like a child. I tell you it is known."

"It is possible, madam, but I do not know it."

"You do not know it, and yet it was only a few days since that a page fell from his horse before the gate at Trianon. Perchance you were there?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you did not enter the chateau?"

"Perhaps."

"And you were handed a paper?"

"Yes, madam."

"And you bore it to the king."

"Assuredly."

"The king was not at Trianon; he was hunting and the marchioness was alone, am I not right?"

"Yes, madam."

"She had just risen; she was hardly dressed, having nothing on, it is said, but a large dressing-gown."

"Those who can not be prevented from talking will probably say whatever comes into their heads."

"Very true, but it appears there has passed between her head and yours a glance that was not one of reproval."

"What do you mean by that, madam?"

"That you have not displeased her."

"I know nothing about it and I would be very sorry to learn that kindness, so sweet and

so rare as hers, kindness which I had no reason to expect, should be the cause of any annoyance to her."

"You take fire very quickly, chevalier; anyone might think you were about to provoke a quarrel with the entire court; you could never kill all of them."

"But, madam, if a page has met with an accident, and if I have delivered his message—permit me to ask why I am questioned."

The mask pressed his arm, and said:

"Listen."

"As long as you please, madam."

"This is the way matters stand. The king no longer loves the marchioness, and, in fact, no one believes he ever did. She has just been guilty of an act of imprudence; she has set parliament by the ears with her tax of two sous, and to-day she has gone so far as to attack a powerful organization, the Society of Jesus. She will be defeated but she has dangerous weapons and before yielding she will use them."

"Well, what have I to do with this?"

"I am about to explain. M. de Choiseul is not on good terms with M. de Bernis; neither of them knows what course to pursue. Bernis will resign and Choiseul will take his place; a word from you will decide it."

"In what way, I beg leave to ask?"

"By allowing the story of your visit with Madam de Pompadour to get abroad."

"What connection is there between my visit and the Jesuits and parliament?"

"Write one word for me and the marchioness is lost. And you may be sure of the liveliest appreciation, of the sincere gratitude—"

"I beg your pardon, madam, but that is a cowardly act you ask me to commit."

"Is there any such thing as honor in politics?"

"I am sure I do not know. Madam de Pompadour dropped her fan before me; I picked it up and handed it to her; she thanked me, she even allowed me, with that gracious consideration which is so characteristic of her, to thank her in return."

"A truce to ceremony, time is precious; my name is Countess d'Estrades. You love Made-moiselle d'Annebault, my niece, you need not deny it; you seek an appointment as cornet—you shall have it to-morrow, and if Athenais pleases you, you shall become my nephew at once."

"O! madam, how kind of you!"

"But you must speak."

"No, madam."

"I understood that you loved that little girl."

"As much as anyone can love; but if my love is worthy to be laid at her feet, my honor must be as unsullied."



"You are very obstinate, chevalier! Is that your final answer?"

"It is as final as the first."

"You refuse to enter the guards? You refuse my niece's hand?"

"Yes, at such a price."

Madam d'Estrades flashed a glance at the chevalier that was full of curiosity; then, failing to detect in his face any sign of hesitation, she turned slowly away and became lost in the crowd.

The chevalier, at a loss to account for that singular interview, sat down in a corner of the room.

"What is the matter with that woman," he mused, "is she a fool? She would turn the government upside down by means a stupid piece of calumny, and, in order to win the hand of her niece she offers me dishonor! But Athénais would have nothing to do with me, or, if she should become a party to such an outrage, it would be I who would refuse her! What! try to injure the good marchioness, to defame her, to black her name—never! no, never!"

Always absorbed in his reflections to the point of unconsciousness, the chevalier sprang to his feet and was doubtless about to shout his loyalty to his benefactress when a little, rose-colored finger touched him on the shoulder. He

raised his eyes and saw before him the same two masks.

"You are unwilling to aid us then?" inquired one of the masks, disguising her voice. But although the two costumes were exactly alike, the manner and accent were not the same.

"Will you speak, monsieur?"

"No, madam."

"Will you write?"

"No."

"You are truly very obstinate. Good evening, lieutenant."

"What is that you say, madam?"

"Here is your brevet and your marriage contract." And she threw him her fan.

It was the same one the chevalier had picked up on two different occasions. Some little loves by Boucher played over its surface in the midst of decorated pearl. There could be no doubt of it, that fan belonged to Madam de Pompadour.

"O heavens! marchioness, is it possible?"

"Quite possible," said she, raising from her chin the bit of black lace that concealed it.

"I know, madam, that I can not express—"

"It is not necessary. You are a gallant man, and we shall see you again for you are to be with us. The king has given you a place in the white cornet. When you have need of assistance remember that there is no more elo-

quent plea than discretion. And pardon us," she added, smiling as she turned away, "if before giving you our niece, we have taken the trouble to obtain information."*

*Madame d'Estrades was shortly after disgraced with M. d'Argenson for having conspired, seriously this time, against Madame de Pompadour.

FREDERIC AND BERNERETTE

I

During the last years of the Restoration a young man from Besançon by the name of Frederic Hombert came to Paris to pursue his studies. His family was not rich and allowed him only a modest income; but as he was quite orderly and careful, a little sufficed him. He lodged in the Latin Quarter in order to be near his work; his tastes and inclinations were so sedentary that he seldom visited the promenades, the public squares and the monuments which are the objects of the curiosity of strangers in Paris. The society of some young men with whom he was thrown in contact at the Law School, some homes that letters of introduction had opened to him, such were his only distractions. He kept up a regular correspondence with his parents and informed them of his success at examinations as soon as he had passed them. After having worked assiduously for three years

he finally reached the point where he was ready to become a full-fledged advocate ; he had only to make his argument and had already fixed upon the date of his return to Besançon when an unforeseen circumstance disturbed his plans.

He was living in a third story apartment in the Rue de la Harpe. One morning while watering the flowers in his window, he espied directly opposite him in the window of a neighboring house, a face that caused him to smile. She was looking at him in such a gay and open manner that he could not help nodding to her. She returned his salutation with good grace and from that moment dated a friendship that was recognized every morning by a "bonjour." One day when Frederic had awakened earlier than usual, before saluting his neighbor he took a piece of paper, folded it in the shape of a letter and showed it to the young girl as though to ask her if she would write to him ; but she shook her head as a sign of refusal, and left the window as though offended.

On the morrow he chanced to encounter her in the street. She was just returning to her room and was accompanied by a young man whom Frederic did not know and whom he had never seen among the students. Judging from his neighbor's general appearance, in spite of the fact that she wore a bonnet, he decided that she must be what is known at Paris as a

grisette. Her cavalier was doubtless her brother or her lover, probably the latter. Whatever he was Frederic decided to think no more of the matter. The cold weather had come and he removed his flowers from the window; yet he continued to look out from time to time; his table was near the window and he arranged the curtain in such a manner that he could see without being seen.

His neighbor no longer appeared at the window in the morning; every evening about five she would close the blinds and light the lamp. One day Frederic made so bold as to throw her a kiss. He was surprised to see her return it as gaily as she had returned his first salute.

He again showed her the paper which still lay folded on his table, and explaining his meaning as best he could by signs, asked her either to write to him or permit him to write to her. But the reply was no more favorable than the first; the grisette shook her head and continued to shake it for eight days. Kisses were welcome but letters were tabooed. At the end of a week Frederic had tired of his tentative correspondence and holding the letter up before his neighbor he tore it up. At first she laughed, then seemed undecided, and finally drew a letter from her apron pocket and showed it to the student. You may be sure he did not shake his head. Not being able to speak he

wrote on a large sheet of paper the following three words in big letters; "I adore you!" Then he placed the placard on a chair and arranged a lighted candle on either side. The beautiful grisette was thus enabled, by the aid of her lorgnette, to decipher her lover's first declaration. She responded with a smile and made a sign to Frederic to come down and receive the letter she had shown him.

It was quite dark and foggy. The young man descended, crossed the street and entered his neighbor's house; the door was open and the young girl was at the foot of the stairs. Frederic, folding her in his arms, was more prompt in kissing her than speaking to her. She escaped, trembling.

"What have you written to me?" he asked; "when and how may I see you?"

She stopped, retraced her steps, and slipping her note into Frederic's hand said:

"Here, take it, and do not pass your nights away from your lodging."

It had chanced, in fact, that in spite of his prudence, Frederic had passed some nights away from his room, and the grisette had noticed it.

When two lovers are agreed, obstacles do not count. The note handed to Frederic urged the greatest caution, referred to menacing dangers, and asked where he intended to see her. Sure-

ly not in the young man's room, you say. Another room in the neighborhood must be found. The Latin Quarter does not lack such rooms. The first rendezvous was appointed when Frederic received the following note :

"You tell me that you adore me and yet do not say whether you think me pretty. You have not had a good look at me, and in order to love me it is necessary for you to see me better. I am going out with my servant; do you leave your room at the same time and meet me in the street. You will approach me as an acquaintance, address some words to me, and improve your time looking at me. If you find me pretty you may tell me so and I will not be angry. It is all very simple and, moreover, I am not so bad.

"A thousand kisses.

"BERNERETTE."

Frederic obeyed his mistress' orders and I can only say that the proof was satisfactory. Yet Bernerette, by a refinement of coquetry, instead of taxing the resources of her toilette, appeared in negligée, her hair done up under her bonnet. The student bowed respectfully, told her that he found her more beautiful than ever, and returned to his room delighted with his new conquest; but she seemed still more beautiful the next day when she appeared at their rendezvous and he saw that she was beautiful when dressed up in all her finery as well as in negligée.

II

Frederic and Bernerette had fallen in love almost before they had exchanged a single word and they soon began to thee and thou each other like old friends. Wrapt in mutual embrace they sat before the fire. Bernerette, leaning on her lover's knees, her cheeks glowing with pleasure, informed him who she was. She had played in comedy in the provinces; her real name was Louise Durand, Bernerette her *nom de guerre*; for the last two years she had been living with a young man whom she no longer loved. She wished to get rid of him and change her manner of life; she would either return to the theatre if she could find a protector, or seek some occupation. She said nothing of her family or of her past. She merely announced her intention of breaking the bonds which at present confined her and which she found insupportable. Frederic did not wish to deceive her and so told her just how matters stood with him; being poor and almost unknown he could be of little assistance to her.

"As I can not assume the responsibility of your support, I am unwilling to be the cause of a rupture; but as I could not endure sharing you with another, I shall leave you, much to my regret, and cherish in my heart the memory of this happy day."

At this unexpected declaration, Bernerette began to weep.

"Why go away?" she asked. "If I quarrel with my lover it is not your fault, since I made up my mind some time ago to leave him. If I enter a laundry and learn the trade, will you cease to love me? It is too bad you are not rich. But what of it? We will do the best we can."

Frederic was about to reply but a kiss imposed silence.

"Let us say no more about it," resumed Bernerette. "When you wish to see me, signal to me from your window, and do not worry about matters that do not concern you."

For the next six weeks Frederic neglected his work. His theme lay on his table uncompleted; from time to time he would add a line. He knew that if he desired to enjoy himself he had only to step to his window; Bernerette was always ready; and when he asked her how she happened to have so much leisure, she replied that that did not concern him. The small savings he had put aside rapidly disappeared. He was soon obliged to have recourse to a friend before he could give his mistress a supper.

When that friend, whose name was Gerard, learned of Frederic's new kind of life, he said to him:

"Take care, my friend, you are in love. Your grisette has nothing, and you have but little; if I were in your place I would be shy of these comediennes from the provinces; these passions lead farther than you suppose."

Frederic smilingly replied that it was not a matter of love but a mere passing fancy. He told Gerard how he had made Bernerette's acquaintance through his window.

"She is a girl who thinks of nothing but laughter," he said to his friend, "there is nothing dangerous about her and nothing serious in our liaison."

Gerard yielded to these representations but induced Frederic to go to work on his theme. The latter assured him that his theme would soon be finished, and then in order to prove it, set to work for some hours; but Bernerette was expecting him that evening. They visited *la Chaumiere* and work was laid aside.

La Chaumiere is the Tivoli of the Latin Quarter, the rendezvous of students and grisettes. It is necessarily a place for good company and it is also a resort of pleasure, one can drink or dance, and a frank gayety, at times a little boisterous, animates the assembly. The *Elegantes* are there in their round bonnets and the fashionables in their velvet; there is smoking, clinking of glasses, and love-making, all in the open air. If the police should refuse admis-

sion to all suspicious characters, it would be the only spot in Paris where the old student life, so free and so happy, the traditions of which are gradually disappearing, is maintained.

Frederic, in his capacity of provincial, was not one to find fault with the people he met there; much less Bernerette, whose only idea was diversion. A certain knowledge of worldly custom is essential in order to know just where to seek amusement. Our happy couple did not reason over their pleasures; when they had danced all evening they left, fatigued and content. Frederic was so much of a novice that the first follies of youth seemed happiness itself. When Bernerette, leaning on his arm accompanied him in a promenade along the Boulevard Neuf, he imagined there was nothing more delightful in store for mortals. From time to time they would talk about their affairs but as a rule both were reticent on the subject. The furnished room near the Luxembourg was secured for two months; that was important. Sometimes Bernerette would bring a cake under her arm, and Frederic a bottle of wine. On these occasions they would arrange a little spread and Bernerette would sing some vaudeville couplets for dessert; if she forgot her words, the student would improvise verses to replace them, and if he found that his verses failed to rhyme, a kiss would do just as well.

Thus they would pass the time without a thought of the future.

"You are doing nothing at your work," said Gerard, "and your passing fancy bids fair to outlast a genuine passion. Take care; you are spending your money and neglecting the means of earning any."

"Calm yourself," replied Frederic; "my theme advances and Bernerette is going to work in a laundry. Allow me to enjoy myself in peace for a time and do not worry about the future."

Yet the time was rapidly approaching when the theme must be printed. It was finished in haste and was not worth less on that account. Frederic was admitted to practice at the bar; he sent several copies of his dissertation to Besançon, accompanied by his diploma. His father replied to this happy news by sending him a sum of money more than sufficient to enable him to return home. Paternal joy came, so to speak, unwittingly to the succor of love. Frederic was able to return the money he had borrowed from his friend and at the same time convince him of the folly of his remonstrances. He wished to make Bernerette a present but she refused it.

"Give me a supper," she said; "all I wish of you, is you."

The young girl's temperament was so joyous that the least trouble could be easily detected.

One day Frederic found her sad and asked her the cause. After some hesitation she drew a letter from her pocket.

"It is an anonymous letter," she said; "the young man who lives with me received it yesterday and gave it to me saying he did not put any faith in accusations which were not signed. Who wrote it? I do not know. The orthography is as bad as the style, but it is none the less dangerous on that account; I am denounced as an abandoned woman and the very hour of our last rendezvous is given. It must be some one in the house, a porter or maid, I do not know what to do, or how to protect myself from the danger which threatens me."

"What danger?" asked Frederic.

"I fear," replied Bernerette with a smile, "that my life is in danger. I have to do with a man of violent temper and if he knows that I have deceived him, I believe him capable of killing me."

Frederic read the letter over and over in vain, he could not recognize the writing. He returned to his room very much disturbed and resolved not to see Bernerette for several days, but he soon received a note.

"He knows all," said she; "I do not know who has informed him, but suspect the porter. He will call on you; he wishes to fight you. I cannot say more; I am more dead than alive."

Frederic passed the entire day in his room; he was expecting a visit from his rival or at least some provocation. He was surprised that he did not receive either the one or the other. The next day and for the eight following days the same silence. He learned finally, that M. de N——, Bernerette's lover, had had an understanding with her, according to the terms of which, the latter had left her rooms and gone to her mother. Left alone, in despair over the loss of a mistress whom he loved to distraction, the young man had gone out one morning and never returned. At the end of eight days the door to his apartments was forced; on the table was found a letter announcing his fatal design. A week later the remains of this unfortunate young man were found in the forest of Meudon.

III

The impression which the news of the suicide made on Frederic was profound. Although he did not know the young man and had never addressed a single word to him, he knew his name, which was that of an illustrious family. He saw the parents and brothers bowed down

in sorrow, he learned the details of the sad search for the dead. The seals were affixed to the door of the little room across the street; the furniture removed and the window beside which Bernerette was accustomed to work, left open, revealing only bare walls within.

One does not experience remorse unless one has been culpable and Frederic had no serious reproach to make since he had deceived no one and had not even known how matters stood between the grisette and her lover. But he was filled with horror upon seeing himself the involuntary cause of such a cruel fatality.

"Why did he not follow me up?" he asked himself. "Why did he not turn against me the arm which he used with such deadly effect against himself? I do not know how I would have acted nor what would have happened but my heart tells me that this sad result would have been avoided. Why did I not know how much he loved her? Why was I not the witness of his grief? Who know perhaps I would have gone away; I would perhaps, have been convinced, cured, brought to my senses by frank and friendly words. In any case he would still be alive, and I would like it better to think he had broken my head than to reflect that in dealing himself his death-blow he pronounced my name."

These sad reflections were interrupted by a

letter from Bernerette; she was sick and confined to her bed. In their last interview M. de N——, had struck her and she had fallen and sustained severe injuries. Frederic started out to see her but courage failed him. In keeping her as his mistress, it seemed to him he would be committing murder. He decided to go away; after placing his affairs in order he sent her what he could spare, and promised that he would always be ready to help her if she should be in need; then he returned to Besançon.

His arrival was, as you may readily imagine, a joyful event for his family. He was congratulated on his new title and overwhelmed with questions about his life in Paris; his father proudly introduced him to all the village notables. He was at once informed of a plan that had been formed during his absence; they wished to get him a wife and proposed the hand of a young and pretty woman of honorable fortune. He neither refused nor accepted; there was in his soul a sadness which nothing could dispel. He allowed them to do as they pleased, going everywhere and replying as best he could to the many questions with which he was plied, even forcing himself to pay court to his intended; but he performed these duties mechanically and without pleasure; not that Bernerette was so dear to him as to make him renounce an advantageous marriage, but his

recent experiences had effected him so deeply that he could not at once recover from the shock. In his heart, troubled by the memory of the tragic past, there was no room for hope; these two sentiments so strong in themselves, could not occupy his heart at the same time; they may be reconciled only when they have lost their first power, and it is then that they merge into a single emotion.

The young lady in question was of melancholy disposition. Toward Frederic she experienced neither sympathy nor repugnance; it was in her case, as in his, merely obedience to her parent's commands. Thanks to the freedom allowed them, they both learned the truth. They felt that love would not come to them but that friendship had come of its own accord. One day when the two families had made up a little party for a day in the woods, Frederic offered his intended his arm. She asked him if he had not left some object of his affections at Paris, and he told her his story. At first she thought it rather interesting and treated it as a mere bagatelle; Frederic never spoke of it except as an unimportant piece of folly; but the finale seemed rather serious to Mademoiselle Darcy.

"Indeed," said she, "it is very cruel. I understand what has passed in your heart and I esteem you the more for it. But you are not at

fault; time will heal all wounds. Your parents are as eager as mine, doubtless, to bring about our marriage; you may have perfect confidence in me. I will spare you as much ennui as possible, and in any case, the pain of a refusal."

At these words they separated. Frederic suspected that Mademoiselle Darcy had something to confide to him. He was not mistaken. She was in love with a young officer, who had asked for her hand, but, having no fortune, was dismissed by her parents. She gave proof of her frankness in turn and Frederic assured her that she should not repent it. It was tacitly understood between them that they would resist their parents while apparently submitting to their will. They were seldom separated, always dancing together at the ball, talking in the salon, or walking on the promenade; but after passing the day as lovers they would take leave of each other at night vowing they would never become husband and wife.

Such situations are very dangerous. They have a charm which is quite alluring and the heart is not on its guard; but love is a jealous god, and he is angered when his creatures cease to fear him, and it often happens that one loves because one has promised not to love. After a little, Frederic began to recover his gayety; he said to himself that after all, if a certain intrigue had happened to have a fatal denou-

ment, it was not his fault, that anyone else in his place would have done as he did, and that it was best to forget what could not be remedied. He began to look forward with pleasure to his daily talk with Mademoiselle Darcy; she appeared more beautiful than at first. His manner toward her was unchanged but he began to put more warmth into his protestations of friendship. But the young lady was not deceived; feminine instinct promptly warned her of the condition of Frederic's heart. She was flattered and almost pleased; but whether because she was more constant than he, or because she was unwilling to break her word, she decided to break with him entirely and thus take away from him all hope. But she must wait until he should explain himself more clearly; the occasion soon presented itself.

One day when Frederic had been in better humor than usual, Mademoiselle Darcy saw her opportunity. While Frederic was taking his tea she went into a little room adjoining and seated herself near the window. A certain romantic disposition which is often natural to woman, had that day invested her glance and words with a sort of indefinable charm. Although unconscious of the nature of her moods, she felt herself capable of producing a violent impression, and she yielded to the temptation to use this power, even if she should suffer for

it. Frederic had seen her leave the room and soon followed her; he approached her side and after referring to the air of sadness which he remarked in her, continued :

"Well, mademoiselle, have you reflected that the day is rapidly approaching when you must declare yourself in some positive manner? Have you found means of escaping that necessity? I wish to consult you on the subject. My father questions me daily, and I am at a loss what to reply. What objection can I advance against this alliance? How can I say that I do not wish to marry you? If I should pretend that you lacked beauty or intelligence, no one would believe me. I am reduced to the alternative of explaining that I love another, and the longer we delay, the less truthfully can I say that. How could it be otherwise? Can I see you every day with impunity? Can the image of one who is absent retain its clearness in your presence? Tell me, then, what I shall say in reply to these questions, and also tell me what you think of it yourself. Are your intentions unchanged? Have you resolved to consume your youth in solitude? Will you remain faithful to a memory and will that memory suffice? If I should decide from my own experience, I would confess that I do not believe it; for I feel that to resist the promptings of one's heart and the dictates of a common destiny which urge that

one should forget and love, is but to deceive oneself. I shall keep my word if you command it, but I can not refrain from saying that such obedience will be cruel. Know then, that on you alone depends our future. Pronounce our fate."

"I am not surprised at what you tell me," replied Mademoiselle Darcy, "for it is the language of all men. For them the present moment is everything and they are willing to sacrifice all the future to a temptation to turn a pretty compliment. Women, too, have temptations of this kind, but the difference is that they resist them. I have done wrong to trust you and it is only just that I should pay the penalty; but while my refusal may wound you and draw upon me your resentment, you will have learned from me a truth, the force of which you will one day recognize; that truth is, that one who is capable of loving at all, loves but once. Those who are inconstant do not love, they merely play with the heart. I know that it is said that for marriage friendship suffices; that may be so in certain cases, but how could it be possible for us, since you know that I actually love another? Supposing that to-day you abuse my confidence in order to induce me to marry you, what will you do with my secret when I shall have become your wife? Will it not be enough to render happiness for either of

us impossible? I agree to regard your Parisian love affair as a youthful folly; but do you think it gives me a good opinion of your heart and that the fact that you are frivolous, is a matter of indifference to me? Believe me, Frederic," added she taking his hand, "believe me, some day you will love, and that day, if you remember me, you will esteem more highly one who has dared to speak to you in this way. You will then know what love is."

Thereupon Mademoiselle Darcy arose and went out. She had observed the troubled look in Frederic's face and noted the effect her words had on him; she left him sad and despondent. The poor boy was too inexperienced to suppose that in such a formal declaration there could be anything of coquetry. He was not aware of the strange motives which sometimes govern the actions of women; he did not know that she who really desires to refuse, is content to say merely, No; while she who begins to explain, wishes to be convinced.

Whatever the cause, that conversation had a most unhappy effect on Frederic. Instead of endeavoring to persuade Mademoiselle Darcy, he avoided, as far as possible, all occasion for speaking to her in private. Too proud to repent she let him go in silence. He went to his father and spoke to him about returning to Paris to complete his preparations for admission

to the bar. As for their marriage, Mademoiselle Darcy consented to speak of it first; she did not dare refuse outright for fear of offending her parents, so she asked to be allowed time to reflect. They agreed to give a year in which to make up her mind and promised not to speak of the matter before the expiration of that time. Frederic began to prepare for his return to Paris; his allowance was slightly increased and he took leave of Besançon sadder than when he came. The memory of his last conversation with Mademoiselle Darcy pursued him like an evil omen, and while the stage was carrying him far off into the country, he kept repeating, "You will then know what love is."

IV

Frederic did not return to the Latin Quarter; his new duties would lead him to the Palais de Justice and he took a room near the Quai aux Fleurs. Hardly had he arrived when he was visited by his old friend Gerard. During Frederic's absence he had fallen into a considerable fortune. The death of an uncle had made him rich; he had a house in the Chaussée d'Antin, a cabriolet and horses; he kept a pretty mistress, had many friends and lived gaily. He attended the balls and plays and was a

familiar figure on the promenades ; in a word, this modest student had become a young man *a la mode*.

Without abandoning his studies Frederic was dragged into the whirlpool which surrounded his friend. He soon learned to despise the cheap pleasures of *la Chaumière*. One does not see the gilded youth there. Often in worse company, but that does not matter ; custom suffices, and it is considered nobler to seek diversion at *Musard's* with the canaille than at the Boulevard Neuf with honest people. Gerard insisted on taking Frederic everywhere. At first there was resistance and then, at last, acquiescence. He then made the acquaintance of a world of which he had known nothing ; he found himself in the company of actresses and dancers, and the introduction to these divinities has a great effect on a provincial ; he became intimate with harebrained youth, who smilingly referred to a loss of two hundred louis at the gaming table the night before ; he passed the night with them, and saw them after a twelve hours seance at drinking and card playing, asking each other what they should do to pass away the day. He was invited to suppers where each had at his side a woman of his own, to whom not a word was said, and who was taken away, as one would take his cane or his hat. In short he indulged in all

those freaks, those pleasures of a frivolous and careless life which are the portion of the elect, who seem to touch the rest of the human race only on the side of enjoyment.

At first he welcomed this sort of life because it offered him solace and forgetfulness of the past. In fact such a thing as preoccupation was unknown in this sphere; one must plunge into the whirl of pleasure or get into more congenial company. But Frederic was doing himself an injury in that he was losing his habit of reflection and his love of order, the supreme safeguards. He could not afford to keep this up very long, so he made the most of it; an evil chance brought it about that he should win in his first venture at card playing, and as a result he had more to lose. His clothes were made by an old Besançon tailor who had served his family for many years; he notified him that he did not want any more of his clothes, and gave his trade to a fashionable Parisian shop. He had no time now to go to the Palais de Justice; it would not do while he was training with this set of busy idlers, who had not even time to read a paper. So he began to prepare for his admission to the bar by strolling on the boulevard; he dined at the café, frequented the *Bois*, had two suits of clothes and money in his pockets; he lacked only a

horse and a mistress to become an accomplished dandy.

That is very little, it is true ; time was when a man was not a man, did not really live, until he possessed three things, a horse, a woman and a sword. Our prosaic and pusillanimous century, dealing with these three friends, has retrenched the noblest, the surest and the most inseparable for a man of heart. No one has a sword at his side in these days ; but, alas ! few have a horse, and there are those who even boast that they live without a mistress.

One day when Frederic had some debts to pay he was obliged to have recourse to his companions in pleasure who were unable to oblige him. He finally obtained from a banker who knew his father, the sum of three thousand francs on his personal note. With that sum in his pocket, feeling happy and much relieved after his embarrassment, he took a turn on the boulevard before returning to his room. As he was passing the corner of the Rue de la Paix on his way to the Tuilleries, a woman who was leaning on a young man's arm, began to laugh as she caught sight of him ; it was Bernerette. He stopped and followed her with his eyes ; Bernerette, on her part, turned her head several times ; he changed his course without knowing why, and stopped before the café de Paris.

He had been walking an hour and was about to enter and order dinner when Bernerette passed him again. She was alone; he stepped up to her and asked if she would dine with him. She consented but begged him to take her to some café less conspicuous.

"Let us go to a cabaret," said she gaily, "I do not like to eat in the street."

They called a fiacre, and as in the past, exchanged a thousand kisses before asking each other for news.

The tête-a-tête was most happy and all unpleasant memories were banished.

Bernerette, however, complained because Frederic had not come to her, but he merely reminded her that she ought to know the reason. She read the eyes of her lover and at once understood that nothing more should be said on that subject. Seated before a good fire, as on the first day of their acquaintance, they thought of nothing but making the most of the happy encounter which chance had brought about. The champagne enlivened their spirits and inspired those tender sentiments which is the essence of that poetic liqueur, disdained by the delicate. After dinner they went to the theatre. At twelve Frederic asked Bernerette where he should conduct her; she was silent at first, half ashamed and half afraid; then throwing her

arms about the young man's neck she whispered timidly in his ear :

"With you."

He expressed surprise at finding her free.

"Ah! why should I not be free? Have you forgotten that I love you? But I am free," she added, seeing Frederic hesitate, "although the man you saw with me may have led you to doubt it; did you observe him closely?"

"No, I was too busy looking at you."

"He is an excellent youth, a shop-keeper and quite rich; he wishes to marry me."

"To marry you? Are you serious?"

"Quite serious; I have not deceived him, for he knows the story of my life; but he is in love with me. He knows my mother and he spoke to her about it a month ago. My mother was unwilling to interfere in a matter which concerned me and could give him no satisfaction. He wishes me to keep his accounts; that would be a very nice place for me, for he makes fifteen thousand francs a year; unfortunately it is out of the question."

"Why? Is there some obstacle?"

"I will tell you all about it, but let us first go home."

"No, tell me all, frankly."

"Are you making fun of me? I esteem him highly as a friend, for he is one of the best men on earth; but he is too large."

"Too large? How foolish!"

"You have not seen him; he is both large and small and you have such a fine form!"

"And his face, how is that?"

"Not so bad. He has one merit and that is a good honest face; and he is good. I am more grateful to him than I can tell you and, if I had desired it, he would do much for me even if I should refuse to marry him. I would not grieve him for the world, and if I could do him a service I would welcome the opportunity."

"Marry him then, if that is the way matters stand."

"He is too large; it is impossible. But let us talk about it later."

Frederic yielded and when he awakened the next morning he had forgotten his sorrows as well as the beautiful eyes of Mademoiselle Darcy.

V

Bernerette left him after breakfast, refusing to allow him to accompany her. He laid aside the money he had borrowed resolved to pay his debts; but there was no hurry about it. A few days later he dined with Gerard and they did not separate before morning. As he was taking his leave Gerard stopped him.

"What are you going to do? It is too late to sleep; let us go out in the country for breakfast."

A party was made up; Gerard sent to awaken his mistress and tell her to prepare to accompany him.

"It is too bad," said his friend, "that you have no one to take with you; we could make a party of four in that case, and that would be more satisfactory."

"O! that is easily arranged," replied Frederic, yielding to an impulse of amour propre; "if you desire it I will write a note to Bernerette, and although it is rather early, I am confident she will come."

"Good! Who is this Bernerette? Is it not your grisette of the Latin Quarter?"

"The same; she was the subject of your moral discourses."

"Indeed?" cried Gerard, laughing. "But I was doubtless right," he added, "for you are inclined to be constant, and that is dangerous with such girls."

As he spoke his mistress entered; Bernerette did not make them wait but soon arrived, arrayed in her best. A carriage was ordered, and in spite of the cold, they set out for Montmorency. The sky was clear, the sun shining brightly, the young men smoked and the girls

sung ; before they had gone a league they were friends.

The horses were whipped up and as they sped at a gallop through the woods, Frederic felt his heart beating fast with pleasure ; never had he felt more at ease. Bernerette was at his side, he noted with pride the effect she produced on Gerard with her charming face all aglow with the exhilaration of the rapid motion. After a long detour through the forest they brought up at a little eminence on which was perched a windmill. The miller gave them a bottle of white wine and they seated themselves on the grass to enjoy it.

"We ought to have brought some cake," said Gerard ; the ride through the woods was an excellent tonic and I am ravenous ; we could have had a little lunch on the grass before proceeding to Montmorency."

Bernerette drew from her pocket a cheese-cake she had bought while passing St. Dennis, and offered it to Gerard with such grace that he kissed her hand by way of expressing his thanks.

"We would do better," said she, "to dine here instead of proceeding to the village. This good miller's wife must surely have a quarter of mutton in her pantry, and then here are chickens that they could prepare for us. Let us ask what they can do for us ; while dinner

is being prepared, we can take a turn in the woods. What do you say? That will be worth all the antiquated partridges of the *Cheval-Blanc* at Montmorency."

The proposition was accepted; the miller's wife begged to be excused, but was so dazzled by the sight of a piece of gold which Gerard gave her that she went to work, and sacrificed her poultry-yard without remorse. Never was there a gayer dinner. It lasted longer than the revellers had expected. The sun disappeared behind the beautiful hills of Saint-Leu; thick clouds covered the valley and a heavy rain began to fall.

"What will become of us?" said Gerard. "We are two leagues from Montmorency and this is no summer shower that will soon pass over, but a regular winter storm that will last all night."

"Why all night?" said Bernerette. "A winter storm is just as likely to pass over as any other. Let us make up a card party and amuse ourselves until the moon rises, and then it will be fine."

The miller, as you may suppose, had no cards, and consequently there was no card party. Cecile, Gerard's mistress, began to be anxious to reach the inn, lest her new dress should suffer. The horses were placed under a shed. Two big men with hard features entered the

room; they were the miller's sons; they asked for their supper and seemed little pleased to find strangers in the house. Gerard was getting impatient and Frederic was not in good humor. Nothing is so sad as the plight of a party bent on pleasure, when some contretemps disturbs their joy. Bernerette was the only one of the party who seemed undisturbed.

"Since we have no cards," said she, "I am going to propose a game. Although it is November let us see who can find a fly first."

"A fly?" said Gerard. "What do you mean?"

"Let us look for our fly first and then you shall see."

After a careful search a fly was found. The poor insect was all numb with the cold of approaching winter. Bernerette picked him up carefully and placed him in the middle of the table. Then she ordered everyone to be seated.

"Now," she said, "let us each take a piece of sugar and place it before us on the table. Each one shall put a piece of money under a plate and that shall be the wager. No one shall talk or make any movement. Allow the fly to awaken; see, he is already moving; he will go and nibble one of the pieces of sugar, then leave it for another, and then return, according to his caprice. Every time a piece of sugar shall attract him to such an extent that he shall come up to it and touch it, the one to whom

that sugar belongs shall be entitled to a piece of money, until the plate shall be emptied, and then we will begin over again."

This brilliant idea of Bernerette's met with general approval. Everyone followed instructions: two or three other flies arrived. Each one of the party maintained a religious silence while with fixed eyes they followed the lazy movements of the flies as they either crawled over the table or circled above it. If one of them alighted on a piece of sugar, it was the signal for general laughter. Thus an hour passed by and the rain ceased.

"I can not endure a sour-tempered woman," said Gerard to his friend on the return; "good-nature and gayety are fine traits, we must confess; they are perhaps the best of all, for possessing them, one is willingly accorded all other virtues. Your grisette has contrived to turn a tedious hour into a delightful pastime, and I have a better opinion of her than if she had written an epic poem. Will your liaison endure long?"

"I do not know," replied Frederic, affecting an air of indifference. "If she pleases you, you are at liberty to pay your court."

"You are not frank with me, for you love her and she loves you."

"Yes, a mere caprice, as heretofore."

"Beware of such caprices."

The moon was emerging from a mass of clouds in the east, and as she mounted into the heavens, the clouds seem to flee before her. Below, in the valley, the wind was gently waving a sombre sea of heavy grass; it was so dark that the eye could distinguish no feature of the landscape, and although only six leagues from Paris, one could easily imagine oneself before some rocky gorge of the Black Forest. Suddenly a star appeared on the horizon; a gleam of light pierced the darkness; the wooded heights, the groups of chestnut trees, the open glades, the roads and hillocks, were designed against the background of sky as though by enchantment. The travelers gazed, surprised and delighted at the vision.

"Come, Bernerette," cried Frederic, "a song!"

"Sad or gay?" asked she.

"As you please. A hunting song! Perchance the echoes will reply."

Bernerette threw back her veil, began the refrain of a song of the chase; but suddenly she stopped. The brilliant Venus, scintillating above the mountain, caught her eye, and as though yielding to a more tender sentiment, she sung to a German air the following lines which one of Ossian's poems had inspired in Frederic:

Pale star of the night, midst thy heavenly train,
Dispelling the mists with thy splendor serene,
From thy palace of azure in heights empyrean,
What seekest thou here on the plain

The tempest is silent; the winds are now calmed;
The forest that shuddered now sighs thro' the night.

Swift messengers speed in their aerial flight
O'er far sweeping meadows embalmed.
What seekest thou here, what message dost send?
But e'en now toward the mountains, alight with thy ray,
'Thou fleest while smiling, thou leavest thy friend,
And thy last trembling glance is fast fading away.

Thou star, who dost watch o'er the verdure-clad hill,
Sad teardrop of silver on night's robe of black,
Thou who guardest the shepherd who leads at his will
His confident flock o'er the perilous track!
Oh! where dost thou journey, why must thou go?
Thou pearl of the night, thou heavenly beam!
Dost thou seek soft repose where cool waters flow,
Or the rest of oblivion near some flower-laden stream?
Ah! if thou must go, if thy head, crowned with light,
Must be bathed in yon sea where no vision can spy,
Before thou dost leave me, Oh! turn in thy flight,
Thou bright star of love, remain in my sky!

While Bernerette was singing, the moonlight, falling on her face gave it a charming pallor. Cecile and Gerard complimented her on the purity and beauty of her voice and Frederic kissed her tenderly.

They entered the inn and ordered supper. At the dessert Gerard had become so heated by the wine, that Cecile was compelled to quarrel with him in order to discourage his gallantries; they fell into a lively dispute, Cecile finally leaving the table, Gerard following her in bad humor. Alone with Bernerette, Frederic asked her if she understood the cause of the quarrel.

"No," she replied; "it has nothing to do with poetry, however."

"Well, what do you think of it? That young man has conceived a fancy for you; his mistress no longer pleases him, and in order to induce him to break with her, you have only to speak the word."

"How does that concern us? Are you jealous?"

"Quite the contrary. You know very well that I have no reason to be."

"Explain yourself. What is your meaning?"

"My dear child, I mean that neither my fortune nor my occupation, permit me to remain your lover. This is not a whim of the moment, as you know, for I have never deceived you on this point. If I should attempt to play the *grand seigneur* with you I would ruin myself without making you happy. My income scarcely suffices for me alone; moreover, I must soon return to Besançon. You see I explain myself clearly on this subject, however it may wring my heart; but there are some things I can not say; it is yours to reflect and think of your future."

"That is to say you advise me to cultivate your friend's good-will."

"No, for it is he who seeks your favor. Gerard is rich, and I am not; he lives in Paris in the midst of pleasures, while I am destined to become a provincial lawyer. You please him and that fact may be the cause of your happiness."

In spite of his apparent calmness, Frederic was deeply moved. Bernerette was silent and went to lean on the window sill; she was weeping but trying to conceal her tears; Frederic perceived it and stepped to her side.

"Leave me," she said. "You do not deign to be jealous of me, I understand it, but make no complaint; but you wound me cruelly, my friend; you treat me as a little girl and hurt me without any cause."

It was decided that they would remain at the inn for the night and return to Paris in the morning. Bernerette removed the handkerchief which surrounded her neck, dried her tears with it and then knotted it about her lover's head. Then she gently lead him toward the alcove.

"Ah! cruel one!" said she as she kissed him, "is there no way to make you love me?"

Frederic caught her in his arms. He knew the risk he was running in yielding to this tender impulse; the more he felt tempted to yield to it, the more he distrusted himself. He was ready to say that he loved her; the dangerous word expired on his lips, but Bernerette felt it in his heart, and they were both content, the one in not having spoken it, and the other in having understood it.

VI

On their return, Frederic conducted Bernerette to her home. He found her surroundings so poor that he understood why she had refused to allow him to accompany her after their first meeting. It was a furnished house, the entrance to which led through an alley. She had but two rooms and they were scantily furnished. Frederic tried to question her about her condition but she refused to reply.

Some days later as he was entering the dark passage that led to the stairway he heard strange sounds on the landing above. Cries of women calling for help, threats and calls for the police. In the midst of the clamor Frederic distinguished the voice of a man which dominated the rest. He finally caught sight of a young man with a pale face and torn clothes who appeared to be drunk with wine and anger.

"You will pay for this, Louise," he shouted, striking the railing with his clenched fist; "you will pay for this; I will follow you up and make you obey me, or drive you out of this place. What do I care for your threats and the scolding of these old women! You will hear from me again."

With this he descended and left the house in a furious passion. Frederic hesitated about going up when he saw Bernerette at the head

of the stairs. She explained the cause of the scene he had just witnessed. The man who had just left was her brother.

"You have heard that sad name, Louise," she said, bursting into tears, "and you know that it is a part of my misfortune. My brother had been drinking at the tavern and he has treated me thus shamefully, because I refuse to give him money to return."

Shaken by grief and giving vent to her tears, she told Frederic what she had heretofore tried to conceal from him. Her father was a carpenter and very poor; her parents had abused her terribly during her childhood and then sold her, at the age of seventeen, to a man who was no longer young. This man was rich and generous and had given her some education; but he soon died, and finding herself thrown on her own resources, she joined a troop of provincial comedians. Her brother followed her from town to town, forcing her to give him all she earned, and overwhelming her with blows and insults when she could not satisfy his demands. Having reached the age of eighteen she was able to legally free herself from this imposition, but even the protection of the law did not secure her immunity from the visits of this odious brother, who frightened her by his acts of violence and dishonored her by his conduct. Such was the story Bernerette unfolded

to Frederic, a recital the truth of which he could not doubt.

Even if he did not love the poor girl he must have been touched with pity. He learned the address of the brother, and ordered the porter to inform him, in case he should ask for Bernerette, that she had moved to other quarters. But what did it avail to insure her against this brother's exactions, when the poor girl was penniless? Instead of paying his own debts, Frederic payed Bernerette's; she tried in vain to dissuade him, he would not reflect on the imprudence he was committing nor the results it might produce. He allowed himself to be led by the dictates of his heart and he vowed that, whatever might happen, he would never repent his action.

But he was forced to repent, and that very speedily; to meet the obligations he had assumed, he was compelled to assume others more onerous than the first. He did not possess that careless nature which in such circumstances as his, takes away at least the fear of evil to come; on the contrary, whatever virtues he had lost, he still retained his foresight; he would be melancholy and taciturn if it were possible at his age. His friends remarked on the change; he was unwilling to explain the cause; to deceive others he began to deceive himself, and

either through weakness or necessity, allowed his destiny to accomplish itself.

His attitude toward Bernerette, however, remained unchanged ; he frequently spoke to her of his approaching departure, but he did not depart, and he visited her everyday. When he had become accustomed to the stairway, he no longer found the entrance dark or gloomy ; the two little rooms which at first appeared so uninviting, now appeared cheerful and attractive ; the sun shone brightly in the mornings, and they were so small that they were quite warm ; there was room enough for a rented piano. There was a good restaurant in the neighborhood from which meals were brought. Bernerette had a talent that few women possess ; she could be at once prodigal and economical ; but she added to this a merit still more rare, that of being content with everything and having no desire except to please others.

But her faults should also be mentioned ; without appearing an idler, she lived in most distressing idleness. After performing with incredible speed, her household duties, she would spend the entire day, lying with crossed arms on her sofa. She spoke of sewing and embroidering, just as Frederic spoke of going away, that is without doing it. Unfortunately many women have this weakness, especially that class who have special need of occupation.

There are in Paris girls who are born without bread enough to sustain life, who, rather than touch a needle allow themselves to starve while toying with some bit of confectionery.

When the carnival season began Frederic attended the various balls, and fêtes, returning to Bernerette's rooms, at all hours of the day and night. At times, after ringing up the porter he would ask if Bernerette was alone; if a rival had supplanted him, would he have any right to complain? No, since of his own free will he had refused to arrogate to himself any claims on Bernerette's constancy. Shall I say it? What he feared, he at the same time desired. He would then have the courage to go away and his mistress' infidelity would have forced him to leave her. But Bernerette was always alone; seated before the fire during the day; she combed the long locks which fell over her shoulders; if Frederic returned at night she would run to meet him with eyes closed and a smile on her lips; half awake and half asleep she would stir up the fire, prepare something for him to eat, always careful to provide for his every want, never asking him where he had been. Who could resist the attraction of such a life, the charm of a love so rare and so easy? Whatever the cares of the day Frederic was at ease at her side. And if he should awaken in bad humor, the sight of this cheerful girl going

and coming about the room, preparing the morning meal, dispelled all sad thoughts.

If it be true that obstacles in love's path serve to increase passion and lend to difficult interviews the interest of curiosity, yet it must be confessed that there is a strange charm, sweeter, more dangerous perhaps, in the constant society of one beloved. This constant society, it is said, leads to satiety; possibly, but it results in confidence, forgetfulness of self, and when love is true, it is a shelter from all fear. Lovers who meet only at long intervals, are never sure of understanding each other; they appear to be happy, they wish to convince each other that they are happy, and seek the unattainable, which is words to express that happiness. Those who live together have no need to express anything; they are always in sympathy, they exchange glances, a pressure of the hand; they know the joy of being alone, and the abandon of perfect freedom; I sometimes think of this life, when I see two swans borne along by the current, side by side.

If a generous impulse was Frederic's first motive, the strong attraction of this life held him captive. Unfortunately for the author of this story there is only one pen, that of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, that can invest with their proper interest the familiar details of a happy love. And that skilful writer had, to

embellish his ingenuous recital, the ardent nights of the Isle of France and the palms whose shadows threw their delicate tracery over the bare arm of Virginia. It is in the presence of all nature's wealth that he paints his characters: shall I tell how my characters go every morning to the Tivoli, thence to Gerard's, thence to dinner at Very's and thence to the theatre? Shall I tell how, when tired, they played cards before their little fireplace! Who wishes to read such vulgar details? And to what purpose when a single word suffices? They loved each other and they lived together; that will last three months at the very least.

At the end of that period Frederic found himself so much embarrassed that he informed his friend of the necessity of separation. She had been expecting it for a long time and made no effort to detain him; she knew that he had made very possible sacrifice for her, and that she could only resign herself and hide her grief. They dined together once more. Before leaving her Frederic slipped into her hand a paper which contained all he had left. She accompanied him to his rooms without speaking a word on the way. When the cab stopped before his door she kissed his hand, leaving thereon a trace of her tears and they parted.

VII

Frederic, however, had neither the inclination nor the power to leave Paris. For one reason the debts he had contracted during his last stay, rendered it impossible. He worked hard to drive away the ennui which seized him; he discontinued his visits to Gerard, and shut himself up in his room for a month never leaving it except to go to the Palais de Justice. But this solitude after so much dissipation plunged him into profound melancholy. He would sometimes pass an entire day pacing back and forth in his room without even opening a book, utterly at a loss what to do. The carnival was almost over; to the snows of February succeeded the freezing rains of March. Without the distraction of pleasure or of friends, Frederic abandoned himself to the sad influence of that saddest period of the year which is fittingly termed the "dead season."

Gerard came to see him and asked him the cause of this sudden seclusion. He made no mystery of it, but he declined his friend's proffer of assistance.

"It is time," said he, "to break myself of habits that can only lead to loss. It is better to endure some little ennui than to expose myself to real dangers."

He did not conceal the sorrow he felt at his separation from Bernerette, and Gerard could only congratulate him on the step he had taken.

At Mid-Lent he went to the ball at the opera. He found but few in attendance. That last adieu to pleasure had not even the charm of a souvenir. The orchestra, more numerous than the public, played the winter dance music to a desert of floor space. A few masks wandered about the foyer; by their attire and their conversation it could be seen that society had forsaken this mid-lenten fête. Frederic was about to retire when he recognized Bernerette in a mask seated near him; she told him she had come merely in the hope of meeting him. He asked her what she had done since he last saw her; she replied that she hoped to return to the stage, that she was studying a rôle, and expected soon to make her debut. Frederic was tempted to take her out to supper, but reflected how easily he would relapse to the old life and thus delay his return to Besançon.

He pressed her hand and left the room.

It is said that sorrow is better than ennui; it is sad, but unfortunately, true. A disciplined mind can find courage to endure sorrow, however poignant it may be; a great sorrow is often a great good. Ennui, on the contrary wastes and destroys one; the spirit is benumbed, the body stagnant, the thought floating at the caprice

of chance. To have no reason to live is worse than death. When prudence, interest, and wisdom are opposed to a certain passion, it is easy enough to blame the one who yields to that passion. Arguments in favor of this position abound and *nolens volens*, should be considered. But when the sacrifice has been made, when prudence and wisdom have been satisfied, what philosophy or what sophistry is not robbed of its last argument? What reply can be made to a man who says to you: "I have followed your advice and I have lost everything; I have acted wisely and I suffer for it?"

Such was Frederic's situation. Bernerette wrote to him twice. In her first letter she said that life had become insupportable, begged him to come to see her, and not entirely abandon her. He could not trust himself to reply to that appeal. The second letter came some time later. "I have seen my parents," it read, "and they treat me with more kindness. One of my uncles is dead and has left us some money. I am making some costumes for my appearance on the stage; I wish you could see them for I am sure you would be pleased, Come in for just a moment if you happen to pass my door."

This time Frederic allowed himself to be persuaded. He visited Bernerette and found that what she told him was not true. She merely wished to see him. He was touched by her

perseverance, but he felt the more need of resisting it. At the first words on that subject Bernerette closed his mouth.

"I know it," she said; "kiss me and go."

Gerard was going to the country and wished Frederic to accompany him. The fine weather and the healthy out-of-doors life restored some of his wonted gayety. Gerard had done the same thing as Frederic, he had sent off his mistress; he wished to be at liberty. The two young men rambled through the woods together and paid court to a pretty farmer's daughter in the neighborhood. But friends from Paris soon arrived; walks in the woods were abandoned for card playing; the dinners were long and noisy; Frederic could not endure the life which had at first dazzled him and so returned to his solitude

He received a letter from Besançon. His father informed him that Mademoiselle Darcy was coming to Paris with her parents. She arrived, in fact, in the course of the week; Frederic at once called on her. He found her just as he had left her, faithful to her secret love, and willing to employ that fidelity as a weapon in her coquetry. She confessed that she regretted some words she had pronounced during his visit to Besançon. She begged Frederic to pardon her if she had appeared to doubt his discretion, and she added, that, not wishing to

marry, she desired to renew her offer of friendship; when one is unhappy such offers are very welcome; therefore the young man thanked her and took pleasure in spending several evenings at her side.

A certain need of emotion sometimes drives the blasé to seek the extraordinary. It may seem surprising that as young a woman as Mademoiselle Darcy should possess such a strange and dangerous disposition; yet such is the fact. It was not difficult to win Frederic's confidence and induce him to tell the story of his experience with Bernerette. She might, perhaps, have consoled him; in acting the coquette she was at least amused and entertained for her trouble. Instead of blaming him for his folly, she told him that love excused everything, and that his affection for Bernerette did him honor; instead of encouraging him to keep his resolution, she pretended that she did not understand why he had taken it.

"If I were a man," said she, "if I had as much liberty as you, nothing in the world should separate me from the woman I loved; I would willingly expose myself to all misfortunes, to every misery, if necessary, rather than renounce my mistress."

Such language sounded strange coming from the mouth of a young lady who knew nothing of the world except that narrow circle which

contains the society of a provincial town. But for that very reason the language was the more striking. Mademoiselle had two motives for playing that rôle, a rôle, moreover, that pleased her. On one hand she wished to prove that she possessed a large heart and a romantic disposition; on the other she wished to show that far from being displeased with Frederic for having forgotten her, she approved of his love for another. The poor youth was thus a second time the victim of feminine artifice, and allowed himself to be duped by a girl of seventeen.

"You are right," he replied; "after all life is so short and happiness here below is so rare, that one is foolish to reflect and draw on one's-self all manner of sorrow when there is so much that is inevitable."

Then Mademoiselle Darcy changed her tactics.

"Does your Bernerette love you?" she asked with an air of indifference. "Did you not tell me that she was a grisette? What faith can one put in such women? Would she be worthy of sacrifices on your part? Would she appreciate what your constancy would cost?"

"I know nothing about it," replied Frederic, "and I am not so deeply in love myself," he added lightly. "I have never dreamed of anything except passing an agreeable moment at

her side. I begin to tire of it already, that is the worst of it."

"Fie! then," cried Mademoiselle Darcy, "what does such a passion amount to!"

Now fairly launched on the subject the young lady warmed up to it. She treated it as though it concerned herself and her active imagination carried her on.

"Is a mere pursuit of pleasure, loving?" she asked. "If you do not love that girl why do you go to see her? If you do love her why do you abandon her? She suffers, she weeps, perhaps; how can miserable money considerations enter into the councils of a noble mind? Are you so cold, such a slave to your interests as my parents were to theirs when they sacrificed my happiness? Is that the rôle for a young man and ought you not to blush for it? But no, you do not know your own heart, the first-comer will console you, your mind is simply unemployed. Ah! it is not thus that one loves! I told you when you left Besançon that one day you would know what love is; but if you have no more courage than this, I tell you to-day that you will never know what love is."

Frederic was returning to his room one evening after a conversation of this kind. Overtaken by a shower he entered a café and ordered a glass of punch. When one's heart has been compressed by a sad experience, the slight-

est excitation suffices to make it beat with more than ordinary force, and we feel that it is like a vase which is filled to overflowing. When Frederic left the café, he quickened his pace. Two months of solitude and privation were weighing him down; he felt an imperative need of shaking off the burden which was crushing him. He involuntarily turned into the street leading to Bernerette's; the rain had ceased and the moon was shining; he looked up at the windows of that room which had become so familiar to him. He placed a trembling hand on the door-bell; he wondered if he would find the fire covered with ashes and supper ready in that little room. As he was about to ring, he suddenly recoiled, and hesitated.

"But what harm will it do," said he to himself, "if I pass an hour with Bernerette? What danger do I run? Shall we not be free on the morrow? Since necessity separates us, why should I fear seeing her for a moment?"

It was midnight; he gently pulled the bell and the door opened. As he was ascending the stairs the porter called to him that there was no one there. It was the first time he had failed to find Bernerette at home. He supposed she had gone to the theatre and replied that he would wait for her; but the porter informed him that Bernerette had gone away

early in the morning and would not return until the next day.

What does it avail to pretend indifference when one loves? Frederic had so often sworn that he was not jealous, he had repeated the assertion so many times before his friends, that he had come to believe it himself. He walked to his rooms whistling a waltz.

"She has another lover," he repeated to himself. "That is just what I desired. Now I am content."

But hardly had he reached his room when he experienced a feeling of mortal weakness. He sat down and placed his head in his hands as though to compress his thoughts. After a useless struggle, he arose with tear-stained face and found some consolation in confessing to himself, that he had passed through an experience that had left its indelible impress upon him.

Extrême languor succeeded to this violent shock. Solitude became intolerable and for several days he passed his time visiting and attending the theatres. The more he tried to recover his old feeling of indifference, the more he abandoned himself to a blind passion for revenge. A distaste for life took possession of him. He recalled the sad circumstance which had attended their early acquaintance; that funeral scene rose constantly before his eyes.

"I begin to understand it," said he to Gerard,

"I am not surprised that men in my condition should attempt self-destruction. It is not for a woman that one commits suicide but because life is worse than useless when one suffers as I do, no matter what the cause."

Gerard knew his friend too well to doubt his despair and he loved him too much to abandon him. He used his influence with the government to secure an appointment for Frederic. One evening he handed him an order from the minister of foreign affairs.

"A trip abroad is the best remedy for such a trouble as yours," he said. "In order to induce you to leave Paris I have assumed the rôle of solicitor and I have succeeded. If you are brave you will set out at once for Berne where this order directs you."

Frederic did not hesitate. He began to put his affairs in order. He wrote to his father apprising him of his plans and asking for his consent. The reply was favorable. At the end of fifteen days his debts were paid and there was nothing to oppose his departure.

Mademoiselle Darcy asked a thousand questions he did not care to answer. So much that he had not clearly seen in his own heart appeared plain to him in view of this young lady's curiosity. Now that he understood how serious his passion had become, he realized how frivolous was Mademoiselle Darcy's interest in

it. He did what all men do under the circumstances. In order to hasten the cure, he pretended that he was already cured, that he had been interested in a mere passing sentiment, but that he was old enough to think of more serious matters. Mademoiselle Darcy, as you may guess, did not approve of such sentiments; she could see nothing in the whole world that was serious except love, the rest seemed to her contemptible. Such, at least, was the tenor of her conversation on the subject. Frederic allowed her to talk and agreed with her that he did not know what love was. His heart told him the contrary, but in consenting to consider himself inconstant, he was trying to deceive himself.

In proportion as he felt his courage leaving him, he hastened his departure. He could not, however, escape one thought which continually beset him. Who was Bernerette's new lover? What was she doing? Ought he to try to see her again? Gerard said no; his advice was to do nothing by halves. The moment Frederic decided to leave Paris, he urged him to forget everything.

"What do you want to know?" he asked; "Bernerette would either refuse to say anything or she would conceal the truth. Since it is proven that she has another lover, what is the use of making her confess it? A woman is

never sincere with an old lover except when there is no possibility of a reconciliation. What could you hope to gain by an interview? She no longer loves you."

Gerard spoke thus forcibly in order to convince his friend that there was but one course open to him. I allow those who have ever loved to judge of the effect his words produced. But many have loved who have never known it. The bonds of this life, even the strongest, weaken with time; some, but only a few, break. Those whose love has been enfeebled by absence, ennui, or satiety, would never know what they had experienced unless some sudden stroke should fall. The coldest heart bleeds and expands after such a stroke; he who remains insensible is no man. Of all the wounds death inflicts here below, before the final stroke of dissolution, this is the deepest. One must have looked through streaming eyes upon a faithless mistress in order to understand these words: "She no longer loves me." The memory of these words is the fruitful cause of future tears; it is a sad experience. If I should attempt to give to the inexperienced an idea of my meaning, I would say that I do not know which is the more cruel experience, to lose a woman one loves by inconstancy, or by death.

Frederic could not reply to Gerard's words of advice, but an instinct stronger than reason

struggled against them. He pursued another course to his end; without saying a word about his intentions or reflecting on the results, he decided to have news from Bernerette. He wore a ring that she had often admired. In spite of his love for her, he had never been able to decide to give her this ring which was a gift from his father. He handed it to Gerard saying that it belonged to Bernerette, and begged him to return it to her. Gerard willingly charged himself with the commission, but he was in no hurry to execute it. Frederic insisted; he was compelled to humor him.

The two friends went out together one morning, and while Gerard went to Bernerette's lodging, Frederic waited for him in the Tuileries. He wandered about in a sad and pre-occupied manner among the crowds of pedestrians. He experienced some regret at parting with a family relic that was dear to him; and what could he hope from the sacrifice? What news could it bring that would console him? Gerard was going to see Bernerette and if some word, or some tears should escape her, would he not consider it his duty to overlook them? Frederic looked through the railing about the garden, and imagined that he saw his friend returning with an air of indifference. What did it matter? He would have seen Bernerette and she must have said something. Who knows

what chance may bring about? He may have learned many things in that visit. The longer Gerard delayed coming, the stronger grew Frederic's hope.

The heavens were cloudless; the trees were beginning to bud and put forth verdure. There is a tree in the Tuilleries that is called "the tree of the twentieth of March." It is a chestnut tree which, it is said, blossomed the day the king of Rome was born, and which blossoms every year on that date. Frederic had sat under that tree many times, and now turned to it from force of habit. The tree was faithful to its poetic renown; its branches were laden with the first blossoms of the year. Women, children and young people were coming and going. The joy of springtime shone on every face. Frederic reflected on the future, on his trip, on the country he was going to visit; a feeling of anxiety mingled with hope took possession of him, everything about him seemed to call him to a new life. He thought of his father whose pride and support he was, from whom from earliest infancy he had received only marks of tenderness. Little by little, sweeter and more healthy thoughts filled his mind. The multitude swarming about him made him think of the variety and inconstancy of things. Was this crowd not a strange thing, in fact, when one reflected that each individual in it had his

peculiar destiny? Is there anything which can give us a better idea of our value in the eyes of Providence? We must live, thought Frederic, we must obey the supreme guide. We must go on even when we suffer for no one knows whither we march. I am free and still young; I must take courage and be resigned.

As he was occupied with these thoughts, he saw Gerard running toward him. He was pale and much agitated.

"My friend, we must go, quick, there is no time to lose."

"Where are you taking me?"

"To her. I have given you advice that I thought was for the best. But there are times when all calculations are overturned, and prudence is at fault."

"What has happened?" cried Frederic.

"You shall see; come, let us run."

They hastened on their way to Bernerette's lodgings.

"Go up alone;" said Gerard. "I will return in a moment—"and he was gone.

Frederic entered. The key was in the door, the shutters were closed.

"Bernerette," he said, "where are you?"

No reply.

He advanced to the center of the dimly lighted room and by a faint glimmer from the half-

extinguished fire he spied his friend seated on the floor near the chimney.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "What has happened?"

Silence.

He approached her and took her hand.

"Get up," he said, "what are you doing down on the floor?"

But hardly had he pronounced these words when he recoiled with horror. The hand he held was icy cold and an inanimate body rolled at his feet.

In his fright he called for help. Gerard entered followed by a physician. They opened the window and placed Bernerette on her bed. The physician examined her, shook his head and gave some orders. The symptoms were plain, the poor girl had taken poison; but what poison? The physician did not know and sought in vain to discover. He began by bleeding; Frederic held her in his arms; she opened her eyes, recognized him, kissed him, then relapsed into lethargy. In the evening she was given a cup of coffee; she came to her senses as if she had awakened from sleep. She was asked what poison she had taken; at first she refused to say, but when pressed by the physician, she confessed. A leather candle-stick on the mantel-piece bore the marks of lime which had been splashed on it; she had resorted

to that frightful method of augmenting the effect of a small dose of opium, the druggist to whom she had applied, having refused to give her more.

IX

It was fifteen days before she was entirely out of danger. She was able to sit up and take some nourishment, but her health was destroyed and the physician said she would suffer all her life.

Frederic had not quitted her side. He did not know what had been her motive in seeking to destroy herself, and he was astonished that no one in the world seemed to care for her. During the fifteen days he had been with her, neither parent had come to see her, nor had anyone else seemed to take any interest in her. Was it possible that her new lover had abandoned her in such a plight? Was that abandonment the cause of her despair? These two suppositions seemed equally incredible to Frederic, and Bernerette refused to say anything on the subject. So he remained in cruel doubt, troubled by secret jealousy, held by love and by pity.

In all her sufferings Bernerette gave evidence of the most tender affection for him. Full of

gratitude for the attentions he lavished on her, she appeared more light-hearted than ever; but there was a tinge of melancholy in her character, a sort of veil, so to speak, which suffering had thrown over her life. She made every effort to distract him and induce him not to leave her alone. If he prepared to go away, she inquired when he would return. She wanted him to dine at her side and sleep holding his hand. She told him a thousand stories about her past life, but was silent about the present and the cause of her terrible act. No question, no entreaty of Frederic's could elicit a word on the subject. If he insisted she would become sad and distraught.

One evening the physician had just bled her again, when a few drops of blood trickled from the incision which had not completely closed. She smilingly watched a purple tear stealing down her white arm.

"Do you still love me?" she asked of Frederic. "Do not all these horrors disgust you?"

"I love you," he replied, "and nothing shall separate us hereafter."

"Is it true?" she asked, embracing him; "tell me, is it a dream?"

"No, it is not a dream, no, my dear and beautiful mistress; let us be at rest and be happy."

"Alas! it is impossible, impossible, we can not be happy!" she cried in anguish. Then she

added in a low voice: "and if we can not be happy, we must begin all over again."

Although she had only murmured these last words Frederic heard them and shuddered. He repeated them to Gerard the next day.

"My decision is made," he said. "I do not know what my father will say, but whatever happens I will not abandon her to her fate."

He decided to write to his father and tell him all. He did not mention Bernerette's infidelity, but spoke of her beauty, of her constancy, of her sweet obstinacy in determining to see him, and the terrible attempt at self-destruction. His old father loved his son more than his own life. He hurried to Paris accompanied by his sister Mademoiselle Hombert, an aged and very devout lady. Unfortunately neither the old gentleman nor the good aunt possessed the virtue of discretion, and before they had been in town an hour all their acquaintances knew that Frederic was hopelessly in love with a grisette who had poisoned herself on his account. It was also understood that he wished to marry her; the evil-disposed cried out at the scandal, at the dishonor to the family name; under pretext of defending the young man's cause, Mademoiselle Darcy told all she knew about the affair. In short Frederic saw the storm he had conjured up ready to descend on him from every side.

He was obliged to appear before his assembled parents and friends and undergo a sort of examination; not that he was treated as a culprit; on the contrary he was shown every possible indulgence; but he had to lay bare his heart and hear his dearest interests discussed by others. It is useless to say that nothing came of it. M. Hombert wished to see Bernerette; he went to her lodgings, talked with her for some time, asked her many questions to which she replied with a grace and naïveté that charmed the old man. He had had his own love affairs in his youth. He came from that interview much troubled in spirit. He called his son to him and told him that he had decided to make a little sacrifice in favor of Bernerette, if she would promise to prepare herself to earn her living when she should have recovered her health. Frederic carried the proposition to Bernerette.

"And what are you going to do?" she asked. "Do you intend to stay or go away?"

He replied that he would remain; but that it was contrary to his parents' wishes. On that point M. Hombert was intractable. He represented to his son the danger, the shame, the impossibility of such a liaison. He made him understand in a kindly but positive way, that it would ruin his reputation, that it would spoil his future. After having forced him to reflect

he employed the irresistible argument which makes the paternal will all-powerful ; he begged his son to obey him ; the son promised what he wished. So many shocks, so many diverse interests had agitated him that he hardly knew what to resolve upon, and, seeing misfortune, and unhappiness on every side, he dared neither choose nor struggle. Gerard himself, ordinarily so clear-headed, sought in vain for the way of safety and was obliged to admit that he could offer no suggestion.

Two unexpected events suddenly changed everything. Frederic was alone one evening when he saw Bernerette enter. She was pale and her hair was in disorder ; a burning fever made her eyes shine with frightful brilliancy ; her words were brief and imperious. She came she said, to demand an explanation.

"Do you want to kill me?" she asked. "Do you love me or not? Are you a child? Must others act for you? Are you such a fool as to consult your father to learn whether you are to keep your mistress? What do these people want? To separate us. If you desire it you have only to follow their advice, and if you do not desire it, still less. Do you wish to go away? Take me. I will never learn a *metier* and can not return to the stage. What can I do, made as I am? I suffer too much to wait; make your decision."

She spoke in this tone for an hour, interrupting Frederic whenever he attempted to reply. He tried in vain to appease her. An excitation so violent as hers would not yield to reason. Finally exhausted by her violence she melted into tears. The young man took her in his arms; he could not resist such love. He carried her to his bed and placed her on it.

"Remain there," he said, "and may God forgive me if I allow anyone to take you away! I do not care to hear anything more, or to see anyone else, but you. You reproach me for my cowardice and you are right; but I will act, you shall see. If my father casts me out, you will follow me; since God has made me poor, we will live in poverty. I care nothing for name, or family, or fortune."

These words, spoken with all the ardor of conviction, consoled Bernerette. She begged him to take her home on foot; in spite of her fatigue she wished to take the air. On the way they agreed on the plan they were to follow. Frederic would feign submission to his father's wishes; but he would represent to him that with so little fortune it was impossible to risk a diplomatic career. He would ask to be allowed to finish his law studies; M. Hombert would surely yield on condition that his son should forget his foolish infatuation. Bernerette, on her part, would change her quarters; everyone

would believe she had gone away. She would rent a little room in the Rue de la Harpe, or in that neighborhood; there she would live so economically that Frederic's allowance would suffice for both. When his father should have returned to Besançon, he would rejoin her and live with her. For the rest they would trust to Providence. Such was the project these poor lovers conceived, the success of which, as is natural in such cases, they thought was assured.

Two days later after passing a sleepless night Frederic joined Bernerette at six o'clock in the morning. An interview he had had with his father troubled him: he insisted that he set out for Berne; he went to see Bernerette in order to brace up his drooping courage. Her room was vacant. He questioned the porter and discovered beyond all possibility of doubt that he had a rival and that he had been deceived.

This time he felt less grief than indignation. The treason was too evident, and scorn usurped the place of love. Returning home he wrote a long letter to Bernerette overwhelming her with bitter reproaches. But he tore the letter up just as he was about to send it; so wretched a creature was not worthy of his anger. He decided to set out as soon as possible; a place on the mail coach for the next day was reserved and he hastened to inform his father of his plan; the entire family congratulated him; no one

asked him why he had so suddenly decided on his course. Gerard was the only one who knew the truth. Mademoiselle Darcy declared that it was a pity and that all men were deficient in heart. Mademoiselle Hombert increased with her savings the little sum which the young man carried with him. A farewell dinner re-united the entire family, and Frederic set out for Switzerland.

X

The pleasures and fatigues of travel, the attractions of a change of occupation and career, soon calmed his troubled mind. He no longer regarded with horror the fatal passion which had almost ruined him. He was accorded a most gracious reception at the embassy, for he had come well recommended; his face was in his favor and a natural modesty brought out in strong relief what talents he possessed; he at once assumed an honorable position in the world and the most promising future opened up before him.

Bernerette had written to him several times. She playfully inquired if he had gone away for good, or if he intended to return soon. At first he did not reply, but as the letters continued to arrive and became more and more pressing,

he finally lost patience. He unburdened his heart in a reply. He asked Bernerette if she had forgotten her double treachery, and begged her to spare him in the future those feigned protestations by which he was no longer deceived. He added that he was thankful that Providence had enlightened him in time; that his resolution was now irrevocable and that he would not return to France for many years. This letter dispatched, he felt more at ease and entirely freed from the past. Bernerette's letters ceased from that time, and he heard nothing more of her.

A well-to-do English family lived in a pretty house in the outskirts of Berne. Frederic was presented there; three young ladies, the eldest not over twenty, did the honors of the house. The eldest was a beauty of a remarkable type; she was instantly aware of the lively impression she had made on the young attaché, and did not appear insensible to his admiration. However, he was not yet sufficiently recovered to deliver himself to a new love. But, after so many anxieties and sorrows he felt the need of opening his heart to a calm and pure affection. The beautiful Fanny did not become his confidant as did Mademoiselle Darcy; but without his making a confession of his woes she knew that he had experienced some great sorrow, and as the glance of her blue eyes seemed to

console Frederic, she frequently turned them in his direction.

Kindness leads to sympathy, and sympathy to love. At the end of three months love had not come but it was on the way. A man of such tender and unreserved disposition as Frederic could not remain constant except on condition of being confident. Gerard was right in telling him that he would love Bernerette longer than he suspected; but it was essential that Bernerette should also love him, or at least appear to love him. Feeble hearts recoil when threatened with danger; they must either break, or forget, for they have not the strength to be faithful to a memory which causes them pain. So Frederic began to accustom himself from day to day to live only for Fanny; the question of marriage at once occurred. The young man had not a large fortune, but his position was established, his friends, powerful; love, which surmounts every obstacle, pleaded for him, it was decided that the court of France should be asked to countenance the match, and that Frederic, appointed to a secretaryship, should become the husband of Fanny.

The happy day finally arrived; the ceremony had been performed, and Frederic, in the intoxication of happiness, held his bride in his arms. He was seated near the fire; a little jet of flame on the hearth caught his eye, and he

trembled. By a strange freak of the memory he recalled the day when, for the first time, he sat before the fire with Bernerette in that little room in Paris. Such as believe that man hastens ever toward the accomplishment of his destiny may comment on this as they choose. At this moment a letter from Paris was placed in Frederic's hand. That letter announced the death of Bernerette. I need not paint his astonishment nor his grief. I must content myself with placing before the reader the poor girl's farewell to her lover: here one may find the explanation of her conduct, written in that style half-gay, half sad, which was peculiar to the writer:

"Alas! Frederic, you know too well that it was a dream. We could not live in peace and happiness. I wished to go away; I received a visit from a young man from the provinces whose acquaintance I had made in the days of my glory; he was foolish about me at Bordeaux. I do not know how he learned my address; he came to me and threw himself at my feet, as if I were still the queen of the stage. He offered me his fortune which is not large, and his heart which is nothing. It was the day succeeding the one you had left me. You recall it! You told me you were going away. I was not very happy, my friend, and I did not know where I was going to dine. I yielded; unfortunately I could not hold to it; I had sent my slippers to him; I asked him to return them, and decided to die.

"Yes, my dear, I wished to leave you here. I could not endure a life of toil. However, the second time I reached a decision. But my father returned; that is something you did not know. Why should I tell you? I promised to forget you and returned to my adorer. Ah! how tired I was of the whole thing! Is it my fault if all men appear ugly and stupid to me since I have loved you? And yet I can not live on the past. What do you think I could do?

"I do not kill myself, my friend, I merely finish the work already begun; it is not a great murder that I commit. My health is wretched, forever ruined. All that would be as nothing but for ennui. They say that you are about to be married; is she beautiful? Adieu, adieu! Remember, when the sun shines brightly, the day you watered my flowers. Ah! how quickly I loved you! Seeing you, I experienced a shock, a pallor seized me. I have been happy with you. Adieu.

"If your father had not wished it, we would never have separated; but you have but little money, that is the sum of our misfortune; and I, no more. I could not stay in a laundry; what could you expect? Twice I have tried it, but in vain; I am successful in nothing.

"I assure you that it is not because of any mental derangement that I take my own life; I am in possession of all my faculties. My parents, (may God pardon them!) are here. If you knew what they wish to do with me! It is too disgusting to be the plaything of misery and be teased in this way. If we had been more economical it would have been better. But you

would go to the theatre and we passed many joyful evenings at *la Chaumiere*.

"Adieu, my dear, for the last time, adieu. If my health were better I would return to the stage; but I have not the strength. Never reproach yourself with my death; I am sure that this would never have happened if it had been in your power to avert it; I saw it coming, but I did not dare speak of it; I saw the way events were drifting, but I wished to spare you the pain of anticipation.

"It is a sad night, this night I sit writing to you; sadder, I assure you, than that night you came to see me and found me gone. I had never believed you jealous; when I learned that you were angry, I experienced both pain and pleasure. Why did you not come and satisfy yourself on this point? You should have seen me the night I returned from my good fortune; but it is well, you love me more than you dare admit.

"I wish to conclude but I can not, I cling to this paper as to the rest of my life; I crowd my lines as I wish to collect all my power and send it to you. No, you have not known my heart. You have loved me because you are good. You were led to me through pity, a little by pleasure. If I had been rich you would not have left me: that is what I say to myself and it is that that gives me courage. Adieu.

"Is it possible that your father will not repent the evil he has done us? Now I feel it in all its power. What would I not give to know something, to hold in my hands some means of earning a livelihood! It is too late. If, when

a child, one could see one's life in a mirror, there would be no such end as this; you still love me; but perhaps you do not, since you are about to marry.

"How could you write me such a cruel letter? Since you were going away in obedience to your father's commands, I did not think I was doing wrong in taking another lover. Never have I seen anything so droll as his face when I told him that I would return home.

"Your letter desolates me; I have sat before my fire two days without being able to move or say a word. I was born to unhappiness, my friend. You can not imagine how the good God has treated me during my twenty years of life; it is all a game of chance. A child, I was beaten, and if I cried, turned out of doors.

"'Go, see if it is raining,' said my father. When I was twelve I was forced to scrub the floors, and when I had become a woman, I was persecuted! I have passed my life trying to live, and at last I see that I must die.

"God bless you! You, who have given me my only happy days! In those days I breathed a good breath of air; may God requite you! Be happy, free, O, my friend! May you be loved as I love you, your poor, dying Bernerette. Do not grieve; all will have an end. Do you recall a German tragedy you read to me one evening in my room? The hero asks: 'What is it we cry with our last breath?' 'Liberty!' replies the little Georges. You were moved as you read that word. Weep, then, it is the last cry of thy friend.

"The poor die and leave no testament; I send you, however, a lock of my hair. One

day when the hairdresser burned my hair with his iron, I told him that you would punish him. Since you are unwilling that my hair should be burned, you will not throw this lock of hair in the fire.

"Adieu, adieu, now and forever.

"Thy faithful friend,

"BERNERETTE."

I was told that, after reading that letter, Frederic determined to follow Bernerette. I shall not speak of that here; the indifferent too often look upon such acts as ridiculous when one survives. The judgment of the world in cases of this kind is sad to contemplate: it laughs at him who seeks death, and he who dies is forgotten.

TITIAN'S SON

I

In the month of February of the year 1580, a young man was crossing the Piazzetta in Venice. It was early morning and the young man's clothes were in a state of violent disorder; his cap, on which floated a fine scarlet feather, was crushed down over his ears. He was walking at a rapid pace toward the banks of the Esclavons, and his sword and cloak trailed behind him as with disdainful foot he picked his way among the bodies of fishermen asleep on the ground. When he reached the Paille bridge he stopped and looked around. The moon was setting behind Giudecca and the dawn was gilding the Ducal palace. From time to time a thick wreath of smoke and a tongue of fire, escaped from a neighboring palace. Beams, stones, huge blocks of marble and other debris encumbered the Canal des Prisons. Fire had just destroyed a patrician dwelling which lined the bank of the stream. At times

flying sparks rose into the air and by the sinister light of the dying embers a solitary soldier, keeping watch over the ruins, could be seen.

And yet our young man seemed to be interested neither in the scene of destruction nor the beauty of the heavens, tinged with the fresh colors of the dawning day. He looked for some time toward the horizon, as though to distract his dazzled eyes; but the light of approaching day seemed to produce a disagreeable effect on him, for he wrapped his mantle more closely about him and hastened away. He soon stopped before the door of a palace, and knocked. A valet, with torch in hand, immediately opened the door. As he was about to enter he turned and, casting a glance toward the sky, cried out :

"By Bacchus! My carnival has cost me dear."

This young man's name as Pomponio Filpipo Vicellio. He was the second son of Titian, a child of intelligence and imagination, who had inspired his father with brightest hopes, but whose passion for gambling led him into all kinds of irregularities. Four years since the great painter and his eldest son had died, almost at the same hour, and the young Pippo, in those four years, had already dissipated the better part of the immense fortune which that double heritage had given him. Instead of

cultivating his natural talents and perpetuating the glory of his name, he passed his days in sleeping and his nights carousing with a certain Countess Orsini, or at least pseudo countess, who made a profession of ruining young Venetians. Around her there assembled every night a numerous company composed of nobles and courtesans; there they dined and gambled and as no one paid for his entertainment, it goes without saying that the hostess was indemnified in some other way. While the sequins floated about in heaps the Cyprian wine flowed freely, loving glances were exchanged, and the victims, stupefied by wine and love, lost there both their money and their reason.

It was this dangerous place that our hero had just left and he had suffered during the night more than one loss. Beside parting with all his money at cards, the only picture he had ever finished, the picture that all connoisseurs had pronounced excellent, had just been destroyed in the fire at the palace of Dolfino. It was an historical subject treated with a verve and boldness almost worthy of Titian himself; the canvas had been sold to the rich senator and perished with a number of other valuable paintings; the carelessness of a valet had reduced to ashes all this wealth of art. But to his mind this was the least of Pippo's troubles; he thought of nothing but the ill luck which had

caused him to lose at cards, and which seemed to pursue him wherever he turned.

As soon as he entered his house he opened his desk and counted the money which remained in the drawer; then undressing he donned a chamber robe and stepped to the window. Seeing that it was broad daylight he debated with himself whether to close the blinds and go to sleep or stay awake with the rest of the world; it was a long time since he had seen the sun rise, and he thought that orb looked brighter than ever. Before deciding whether to sleep or not, he stepped out on the balcony and took his chocolate. Closing his eyes he thought he saw a table before him, swift fingers hovering over it, pale faces around it, accompanied with the rattle of dice boxes.

"What fatal luck!" he murmured; "is it possible to lose with fifteen?" And he saw opposite him his habitual opponent, the old Vespasiano Memno, throwing eighteen and gathering in the gold heaped up on the table. He opened his eyes to shut out that bad dream and looked down at the little girls on the quay; he seemed to see, in the distance, a masked woman; he was astonished in spite of the fact that it was the carnival, for poor people never mask, and it was strange that, at such an hour, a Venetian lady should go out alone, and on

foot;* but he soon observed that what he had taken for a mask was the face of a negress: he looked more closely as the negress approached and saw that it was a well modelled face. She was walking rapidly and a sudden gust of wind, drawing her motley colored dress about her hips displayed the contour of a graceful form. Pippo leaned over the balcony and watched the negress as she stepped up to his door and, much to his surprise, knocked.

The porter was slow in answering her.

"What do you wish?" cried the young man; "have you any business with me, my brunette? My name is Vicellio, and if they make you wait, I shall come down and let you in myself."

The negress raised her head.

'Your name is Pomponio Vicellio?'

"Yes, or Pippo, as you please."

"You are Titian's son?"

"At your service. What can I do for you?"

Throwing a rapid and curious glance in his direction, the negress stepped back a few paces, skilfully tossed on the balcony a small box wrapped in paper, then promptly turned and hastened away, looking back from time to time until she disappeared. Pippo picked up the box, opened it and found within a little purse enveloped in cotton. He naturally expected to

* At one time it was the custom in Venice to wear masks as long as carnival lasted.

find a note explaining matters. But the note was as mysterious as the rest, for it contained merely these words :

"Do not spend what I inclose too lavishly; when you go out, charge me with a piece of gold, that will be enough for the day; and if any remain at evening, be it ever so little, you will find some one in need who will thank you for it."

When the young man had turned the box over a hundred times, examined the purse, looked out on the quay, and began to realize that he was awake and not dreaming, he said to himself: "I must confess that this is a singular gift, but it comes just apropos. The advice given me is good; but it is impossible to drown anyone who is at the bottom of the Adriatic. Who, the devil, could have sent this to me?"

Pippo readily understood that the negress was only a servant; he tried to think what man or woman of his acquaintance could have sent him this gift, and as his modesty did not blind him, he decided that it was some woman. The purse was of velvet embroidered with gold; it seemed to him that the work was too exquisite to admit of the hypothesis that it had come from any shop. He first passed in review the most beautiful women of Venice, then those who were less beautiful; but he stopped there and asked himself how he could discover whence that purse came. But he continued to dream,

and more than once thought he had solved the mystery; his heart beat faster as he tried to recognize the handwriting; there was a Princess of Bologna who wrote a large hand, not unlike this and a beautiful lady at Brescia whose chirography was somewhat smiliar.

Nothing is more disagreeable than to encounter an unpleasant idea in the midst of a delightful revery; it is as though, in walking through flowery meadows one should suddenly step on a serpent. That was what Pippo experienced when he suddenly remembered Monna Bianchina, who had recently tormented him in a singular manner. He had had an adventure with the woman at a masked ball, and although she was pretty enough, he did not care for her. Monna Bianchina, on the other hand, had suddenly conceived a passion for him, and went so far as to see in his formal politeness a love which he was far from feeling; she devoted herself to him, sent him many tender missives and overwhelmed him with loving reproaches; but he had sworn one day upon leaving her, never to return, and he had scrupulously kept his word. So he came to think that Monna Bianchina might have sent him that purse; the suspicion destroyed his good humor as well as the illusions which cradled it; the more he reflected, the more likely it seemed; he closed the window impatiently and decided to go to sleep.

But he could not sleep; in spite of probabilities it was impossible to renounce a doubt which flattered his pride. He continued to dream; the more he tried to forget the purse, the more he thought about it; he tried to forget that such a woman as Monna Bianchina existed. Then he drew the curtains and turned his face toward the wall so as to avoid the light; suddenly he leaped from bed and called his servants. He had just made a simple observation that had at first escaped him. Monna Bianchina was not rich; she had only one servant and that servant was not a negress, but a big girl from Chioja. How could she have secured, for that particular occasion, that unknown messenger whom Pippo had never before seen in Venice.

"Blessed be thy black face," he cried, "and the African sun that colored it!"

And without further delay he asked for his doublet and ordered his gondola.

II

He had resolved to visit Signora Dorothea, wife of the avogador, Pasqualigo. This respectable old lady was one of the wealthiest and most spirituelle of the republic; she was, moreover, Pippo's godmother, and as there was no

one of distinction in all Venice whom she did not know, he hoped that she would be able to assist him in clearing up the mystery of the velvet box. He suddenly reflected that it was too early to present himself before his protectress, and so decided to take a turn in the *Procuraties* to pass away the time.

As chance would have it he encountered Monna Bianchina who was on her way to make some purchases at the market; he entered a shop with her, and, without knowing why, after exchanging a few unimportant words, said to her:

"Monna Bianchina you sent me this morning a very pretty gift, accompanying it with some good advice; I wish to thank you for your kindness."

In expressing himself thus frankly he hoped to free himself at once of the doubt which tormented him; but Monna Bianchina was too shrewd to evince any astonishment before discovering whether it would be to her interest to do so. Although she had not really sent the young man anything, she saw that there was a chance to make him think so; she replied, it is true, that she did not understand his meaning, but she accompanied her words with such a winning smile and such a shrewd blush that Pippo was convinced, in spite of appearances, that the purse came from her.

"And how long have you had that pretty negress with you?" he asked.

Disconcerted by this question and not knowing what to reply, Monna Bianchina hesitated a moment then burst into laughter and suddenly left Pippo alone. Pippo was bitterly disappointed and decided not to make his projected visit; he returned home, threw the purse into a corner, and thought no more of it.

It happened, however, that a few days later he lost a large sum of money on parole. When he came to pay the debt he found it convenient to avail himself of that purse which was large and looked well on his belt; he therefore took it with him, and the same night played again and lost still more.

"Do you continue?" asked Vespasiano, the old government notary, when Pippo's purse was exhausted.

"No," replied the former, "I do not care to gamble on parole."

"But I will loan you all you wish," cried the Countess Orsini.

"And I, also," said Vespasiano.

"And I also," repeated one of the countess' nieces in her low, melodious voice; "but look in your purse again, signor, there is another sequin within."

Pippo smiled as he found in the bottom of his purse, a single sequin he had overlooked.

"Very well," he said, "one more throw, but I do not care to risk more."

He seized the dice box, won, and then settling himself to play, doubled the stakes; after an hour's play he had made good his loss of the evening as well as that of the evening before.

"Do you continue?" he asked of Vespasiano, whose pile of sequins had disappeared.

"No, I am not such a fool as to allow myself to be milked dry by a man who will risk only one sequin. Curse that purse! There is some witchcraft about it."

The notary left the room in a fury. Pippo was about to follow him, when the niece who had first spoken to him said with a smile:

"Since it is to me you are indebted for your good fortune, make me a present of the sequin which made you win."

That sequin had a little mark on it which distinguished it from the others. He soon found it and held it out toward the pretty niece, when he suddenly cried out:

"By my faith, my pretty one, you shall not have it; but to show you that I am no miser here are ten others which I beg you will accept. As for this one, I wish to follow the advice some one has given me and make a present of it to Providence." With these words he threw the sequin out of the window.

"Is it possible," he mused on his way home, "that Monna Bianchina's purse brings luck? That would be a strange freak of chance if a thing, in itself disagreeable, should have a happy influence over my fortunes."

In fact it seemed that every time he drew on that purse he straightway won: whenever he took out a piece of gold he could not escape a feeling of superstitious respect, and he frequently reflected, in spite of himself, on the injunction found in the box. A sequin is a sequin, he thought, and there are many people who live on less from day to day. This thought made him less imprudent in his expenditures. Unfortunately, Monna Bianchina had not forgotten her conversation with Pippo under the Procuraties. To confirm the error in which she had left him, she sent him, from time to time, a bouquet or some other bagatelle, accompanied by a note. I have already said that he was much annoyed by her importunities to which he had resolved to make no reply.

So it happened that Monna Bianchina, pushed to extremities by this coldness, attempted a most audacious proceeding which greatly displeased the young man. She went to his house during his absence, bribed a servant and succeeded in concealing herself in his room. Upon returning he found her there and was forced to tell her plainly that he did not

love her, and that he would be pleased to have her leave him in peace.

La Bianchina who, as I said, was pretty, flew into a violent passion, overwhelmed Pippo with reproaches that were no longer tender. She told him that he had deceived her in speaking to her of love, that she considered herself compromised by his action, and that she would be avenged. Pippo listened to these threats with ill-disguised irritation; in order to prove to her that he was not at all alarmed, he forced her to take back a bouquet she had sent him that very morning, and then finding the purse at his belt:

"Here," he said, "take this also; this purse has brought me good luck, but I wish you to understand that I will accept nothing from you."

Hardly had he yielded to this impulse of the moment, before he regretted it. Monna Bianchina was careful not to undeceive him. She was full of wrath, but also of dissimulation. She took the purse and went away, determined to make Pippo repent his treatment of her.

He played that evening as usual and lost; the succeeding days he was equally unfortunate. Vespasiano had always the best dice and won considerable sums from him. He revolted against his ill-luck and against super-

stitution and continued to lose. One day as he was leaving the Countess Orsini's place, he called out in the hall-way :

"By my faith, I believe that old fool of a notary was right about that purse being bewitched, for I have not won a single throw since I returned it to la Bianchina."

As he was speaking he saw, floating before him, in a motley colored dress, the graceful form of the mysterious negress. He accosted her and asked her to whom she belonged.

"Who knows?" replied the African with a malicious smile.

"You, I suppose. Are you not Monna Bianchina's servant?"

"No. Who is Monna Bianchina?"

"Who is she? She is the woman who sent you to me with that box the other day."

"O! I do not believe it."

"I know it. Do not try to deceive me. She told me so herself."

"If she told you that," began the negress, then hesitated. She shrugged her shoulders, reflected a moment, then tapping Pippo's cheek, cried out as she turned away :

"My fine young man, some one is making fun of you."

The streets of Venice are a labyrinth of such complicated design, they cross each other in so many ways, in such varied and unforeseen

windings, that having allowed the girl to escape him, Pippo could not rejoin her. He was disgusted with himself for he had made two mistakes, first in giving the purse to Bianchina, and second in not detaining the negress. Wandering about aimlessly he found himself in the neighborhood of the residence of Signora Dorothea, his godmother; he repented not having visited that lady that morning he met Monna Bianchina; he was in the habit of consulting her about everything that interested him and always received advice or encouragement that he highly valued.

He found her alone in her garden, and after kissing her hand, said:

"Let me tell you of a stupid blunder I have just committed. Some one sent me a purse—"

But he had hardly pronounced these words when Signora Dorothea burst out laughing:

"Well, don't you think that flowers and gold look pretty on red velvet?"

"What!" cried the young man, "is it possible that you know—"

At that moment several senators entered the garden; the venerable lady arose to receive them, making no reply to the questions that Pippo in his astonishment continued to ask her.

III

When the senators had retired, Signora Dorothea refused to yield to the prayers and entreaties of her godson, declining to explain what she knew about the mysterious purse. She was annoyed that she had yielded to her sense of the ludicrous, thereby confessing her knowledge of an affair with which she did not wish to be associated. But Pippo insisted.

"My dear child," she said, "all I can say is, that in apprising you of the name of the one who embroidered that purse, I would perhaps render you a service; for she is certainly one of the noblest and most beautiful women of all Venice. Let that suffice, for, in spite of my willingness to please you, I must be silent; I will not betray a secret that I alone possess unless I am permitted to do so honorably."

"Honorably, my dear mother? Do you think that in confiding in me—"

"I understand;" replied the old lady, and as in spite of her dignity she was capable of a little malice, she continued: "since you sometimes write verses why not compose a sonnet on the subject?"

Seeing that he could gain nothing, Pippo ceased his importunities, but his curiosity was so great that he restrained it with difficulty.

He remained to dinner with the avogador, Pasqualigo, being unwilling to leave his godmother, and hoping that the unknown would come to visit her in the evening; but he saw nothing but senators, magistrates and other dignitaries of the republic.

When the sun had set the young man slipped away from the company and sat down in a corner of the garden. He reflected on what course to pursue and decided on two things: he would ask la Bianchina to return his purse, and he would follow the joking advice of his godmother and write a sonnet on the adventure. He decided to give that sonnet, when completed, to his godmother who would doubtless show it to the beautiful unknown. He set about the accomplishment of his double project without delay.

Arranging his doublet, carefully adjusting his cap on his ear, he looked in a glass to see if he was in condition to seduce Bianchina by feigned protestations of love, and to persuade her to make restitution; but he soon renounced this project when he reflected that it would arouse that lady's passion and result in new importunities. He took the opposite course; he hastened to her house as though in a furious passion; he was prepared to play a part and determined to frighten her if she should show a disposition to pass it off as a joke.

Monna Bianchina was one of those blonde Venetians with black hair whose resentment has ever been considered dangerous. Since he had treated her so badly Pippo had received no message from her ; she was doubtless preparing in silence for the vengeance she had sworn. It was, therefore, necessary to strike a decisive blow or risk making matters worse. She was preparing to go out when the young man reached her house ; he stopped her on the stairway, and forcing her to return to her room, he cried :

"Unhappy woman! What have you done! You have destroyed all my hopes and your vengeance is accomplished!"

"Heavens! What has happened?" asked the stupefied woman.

"Can you ask! Where is that purse you said came from you? Do you dare to maintain that falsehood?"

"What does it matter whether I have lied or not? I do not know what has become of the purse."

"You shall return that purse to me or die!" cried Pippo throwing himself on her. And without any regard for the new dress in which the poor woman had just arrayed herself, he snatched aside the veil which covered her bosom and pointed his poniard at her heart.

La Bianchina thought she was about to die and began to call for help ; but Pippo gagged

her mouth with his handkerchief and when he had silenced her he forced her to hand over his purse.

"Thou hast brought misfortune on a powerful family," he hissed, "thou hast interfered with the happiness of one of the most illustrious houses of Venice. Tremble! That redoubtable house is watching thee; neither thou nor thy husband can make a single step without being shadowed by its minions. The Mid-night Band has inscribed thy name in its book; remember the dungeons of the ducal palace. At the first word thou darest breathe of the terrible secret which thou hast maliciously divined, thy entire family shall disappear!"

With these words he withdrew. Everyone knows that no more terrible threat than this could be made in Venice. The pitiless secret arrests of the *corte maggiore* spread such terror throughout the city that anyone who was even suspected prepared at once to meet a frightful death. Such was the effect produced upon Bianchina's husband, Orio, when he learned of the threat which Pippo had made. To be sure, he did not know the motive which had brought this terrible danger upon him; he did not know that it was merely a ruse on Pippo's part. But Orio very prudently decided that it did not make any difference what the motive which had drawn on his head the wrath of the supreme

court; however slight his offence the consequences were to be dreaded. He was not born in Venice, his parents living some distance from the city. The following day he embarked with his wife and was heard of no more. It was thus that Pippo rid himself of Bianchina and paid her with usury for the bad turn she had served him. All her life she believed that a state secret was really connected in some way with that purse she had tried to steal, and as the whole affair was shrouded in mystery she had to content herself with mere conjectures. Orio's parents made it the subject of continual discussion. By dint of much speculation they finally evolved the following plausible explanation. A noble lady, they said, was smitten with a passion for Tizianello, that is to say, Titian's son, who was himself amorous of Bianchina, but who languished in vain for favor in her eyes. And that noble lady who with her own hands embroidered a purse for Tizianello, was no other than the wife of the doge himself. Imagine her wrath when she learned that Tizianello had sacrificed her gift on the altar of his devotion to Bianchina!

Such was the family story whispered in hushed voice about Padua from the little house of Orio.

Satisfied with the success of his first enterprise, our hero began to think of the second. It was a matter of composing a sonnet for his

unknown. As the excitement of this strange comedy had animated his spirits he rapidly turned out some verses that were characterized by a certain verve. Hope, love, mystery, all the passionate expressions common to poets, presented themselves before his exalted spirit. "But," thought he, "my godmother told me that she was one of the noblest and most beautiful women of Venice; I must, therefore, preserve a tone of respect in addressing her."

He erased what he had written and, passing from one extreme to the other, he selected some tuneful rhymes which he tried to fit, not without difficulty, to appropriate thoughts, that is thoughts which were at once noble and beautiful. For hopes too bold, he substituted timid doubt; in place of mystery and love, he spoke of respect and gratitude. Being unable to celebrate the charms of a woman he had never seen, he had recourse to vague terms which could be applied to any face. In short, after two hours of reflection and hard work he had composed twelve passable verses, very harmonious and quite insignificant.

He copied them clearly on a fine piece of parchment and on the margins traced birds and flowers which he carefully colored. But when his work was done, he was undecided whether to bind his verses together or throw them into the canal which surrounded his house.

"What am I doing?" he asked himself. "If my conscience does not speak, why pursue this adventure further?"

He picked up his mandolin and began to walk up and down the chamber, singing to his own accompaniment an old air composed for one of Petrarch's sonnets.

In a few moments he stopped ; his heart was beating fast. He no longer thought of conventions or of effects. The purse which he had wrested from Bianchina and which he had just brought home as the spoils of war, was on the table before him. He looked at it :

"The woman who made that must love me, and must know what true love is. Such a piece of work is long and difficult ; the fine threads, the delicate colors demand time and, while working, she has thought of me. The few words which accompanied the purse expressed the counsel of a friend. It was an amorous cartel sent by a woman capable of experiencing the *grande passion* ; I must bravely accept the challenge."

He returned to his desk and, resuming his pen, he felt the effects of wavering hope and fear more keenly than when he had staked the largest sums on the turn of the dice. Without reflection and without a halt, he rapidly penned his sonnet, of which the following is a close translation :

"When Petrarch's song my childish fancy caught,
I longed to share that noble poet's fire.
He like a poet loved, a lover wrought
His passion into music for Love's lyre.
'Twas he alone possessed the secret key
That opes the guarded entry to the heart;
T'was he who traced in beauteous imagery
The lightest dreams that throng the realm of art.
Oht thou, whose kindly words of counsel come,
A welcome message from an unknown lip,
Accept these humble thanks, with love of one
Whose heart is Petrarch's tho' his pen may slip.
I can but follow in a humble way
Another path from which I must not stray."

Pippo hastened to Signora Dorothea. When he was alone with her, he placed his sonnet on the knee of that illustrious lady and said :

"This is for your friend."

The signora was at first surprised ; then she read the verses and declared she would never deliver them. But Pippo only laughed, and, satisfied that they would each their destination, he left her with the assurance that he had no fears on that point.

IV

Yet he was not happy during the week which succeeded ; his trouble, however, had its charms. He did not leave his house, not daring to move, so to speak, for fear of breaking the spell of fortune. In that he displayed more wisdom than is usually possessed by young men of his

age, for he was only twenty-five; the impatience of youth often causes us to lose our end in our haste to reach it. Fortune would bid us help ourselves and be quick to seize opportunity; for, according to Napoleon, fortune is like woman. But for that very reason she wishes to appear as granting what is taken and should be allowed time to open her hand.

It was the ninth day, toward evening, that the fickle goddess knocked at the young man's door; and it was not in vain, as you shall see. He descended and himself opened the door. The negress stood before him holding in her hand a rose which she held to Pippo's lips.

"Kiss this flower," she said; "there is within its leaves a kiss from my mistress. Can she come to see you without danger?"

"It would be very imprudent for her to come during the day," replied Pippo; "my servants would surely see her. Is it possible for her to come at night?"

"No; who would dare in her place? She can neither go out at night nor receive you at her house."

"Then she must meet me at some other spot which I shall indicate."

"No, she wishes to come here; take your precautions."

Pippo reflected a moment:

"Can your mistress rise at an early hour?" he asked the negress.

"At sunrise," she replied.

"Very well! Listen. I waken, as a rule, quite late and consequently all my servants sleep far into the morning. If your mistress can come at daybreak she can easily enter without being seen. If she can remain with me until night, I will answer for her safety."

"She will do it. Will to-morrow morning be convenient for you?"

"To-morrow morning at sunrise," said Pippo.

He slipped a few sequins into her hand and then returned to his room determined to watch until morning. He undressed as usual as though about to retire; when he was alone he lighted a good fire, dressed himself in velvet doublet, with gold embroidered shirt, scented collar, and sleeves of China silk and then settled himself comfortably at the window to dream of his adventure.

He was not displeased, as one might suppose, at the promptness with which his mistress had given him a rendezvous. We must not forget that all this took place in the sixteenth century, and that the love-making of that time was less restrained by conventions than ours of to day. According to accredited witnesses it appears certain that what we would call indelicacy passed for sincerity, and that

what is to-day called virtue was then regarded as hypocrisy. At any rate a woman who happened to be in love with some fine youth did not hesitate to go to him, and lost nothing of reputation by her act; no one thought of blushing at what seemed perfectly natural; it was the time when a seignior of the Court of France displayed on his hat, in place of a plume, his mistress' silk stocking; and, when accosted by the curious, he replied that it was the property of a woman who was dying for love of him.

Pippo's character was such that, had he been born in our century, he would not, perhaps, entirely change his views on this subject. In spite of his irregular life, even if he were capable of lying to others, he never lied to himself; by that I mean that he valued things at their true worth in spite of appearances, and although capable of dissimulation under certain circumstances, he never resorted to it except for some good purpose. And although he may have looked upon the little episode of the purse as a caprice, he certainly did not think it the caprice of a coquette; I have already spoken of the beauty of design and execution displayed in that purse, all of which indicated care and patience on the part of the donor.

While idly anticipating his promised happiness, he could not help thinking of the stories he had heard of Turkish weddings. When an

Oriental marries, he does not see his bride's face until after the ceremony, as she has stands veiled before him as before all others. They merely carry out their parents' plan and marry, so to speak, on parole. The ceremony performed, the young woman shows herself to her husband who is then able to learn whether he has made a good or bad bargain; as it is too late to remedy matters he must make the best of it, and it does not appear that these unions are more unhappy than others.

Pippo found himself in the position of the affianced Turk; he did not expect, it is true, to find perfection in his unknown, but he easily consoled himself. He had, moreover, the comforting reflection that his bargain was not for all time. He was about to deliver himself to the charms of expectation and surprise without fear of results, and that was indemnity for whatever might be lacking. He supposed that this was to be his wedding day, and it is not astonishing that, at his age, the thought caused him transports of joy.

The wedding day ought to be, in fact, for an active imagination, the happiest experience of life for it is not preceded by any pain. The philosophers, it is true, would tell us that pain seasons the pleasure which it accompanies, but to Pippo's mind a poor sauce did not improve the flavor of the fish. He, therefore, loved easy

pleasures but they must not be gross, and unfortunately it seems to be an invariable law that exquisite pleasures must be dearly purchased. The wedding day is an exception to this rule; it is a unique experience in man's life that satisfies, at the same time, two penchants which are dear to him, indolence and covetousness; the wedding day leads into the young man's home a woman crowned with flowers and ignorant of love, to the cultivation of whose mind and soul; a mother has devoted the best years of life; to win a glance from that beautiful creature has required, perhaps, years of devotion; yet to possess that treasure, the husband has only to open his arms; the mother retires, God himself sanctions it. If, upon waking from such a dream, one should realize that he is not married, who would not wish to repeat the experience every day?

Pippo did not regret not having questioned the negress, for a servant, in such a case, would eulogize her mistress were she as ugly as a mortal sin; the two words which escaped Signora Dorothea were enough. He was only curious to know whether his lady was light or dark. To gain an idea of the beauty of any woman one need but ascertain the color of her hair. Pippo hesitated some time between the two colors but finally decided, for the repose of his spirit, that she had chestnut hair.

But he did not know how to decide about her eyes; he would have imagined them black if she had been a brunette, and blue if she had been a blonde. He supposed they must be blue, not the clear, shifting blue which is at times gray or greenish, but the blue of the azure heavens, which in moments of passion, takes on a deeper tint and becomes sombre as the raven's wing.

As soon as he had these eyes, at once tender and profound, fixed in his mind, his imagination pictured around them a snow-white brow and cheeks as red as the sun-lit summits of the Alps. Between those peach-like cheeks, he seemed to see a delicately modelled nose like that of the antique head which artists call the Greek Love. Beneath, a vermillion mouth, neither too large nor too small, between whose ivory gates there passed the fragrant breath of voluptuous health; the chin well formed and gracefully rounded; the expression frank, but haughty; on a smooth and rather long neck was gently balanced, like a flower on its stem, that gracious head whose sympathetic* poise gave evidence of a noble mind. That beautiful creation of his imagination lacked nothing but reality. "She is about to appear," thought

* *Simpatia* is an Italian word which has no equivalent in our language, doubtless owing to the fact that our character has no equivalent demanding such expression,

Pippo, "she will come with the morning light." And the most surprising thing about his reverie was that it fashioned, without knowing it, the perfect image of his future mistress.

When the Venetian frigate stationed at the entry to the port fired its first gun to announce the hour of six in the morning, Pippo noticed that the lamplight was growing ruddy and that a gleam of light had penetrated through his windows. He arose and slightly raised the curtain. In spite of his sleepless night he felt fresh and active. The dawn was approaching but Venice still slept; that city of idleness and pleasure does not waken so early. At the hour when, with us, the shops are being opened and carriages begin to roll through the streets, the fog still shrouds the deserted canals and covers as with a pall, the silent palaces of Venice. The wind scarcely rippled the water; some sails could be seen off toward the shores of Fusine, bringing to the "Queen of the Sea" her daily provisions. Alone, hovering over the sleeping city, the angel on the steeple of St. Marks shone in the brilliant morning light, the first rays of the rising sun glittering on her gilded wings.

Then the innumerable churches of Venice sounded the Angelus; the pigeons of the republic, warned by the sound of the bells whose strokes they count with marvellous instinct,

were winging their flight over the winding Esclavons on their way to seek the grain which is regularly distributed to them at that hour; the fog was gradually rising; the sun appeared; some fishermen were stirring about their boats; one of them suddenly startled the still air by breaking out into song, his pure, clear voice ringing out in joyous refrain the phrases of a national air; from the buttress of a neighboring warehouse a heavy voice responded in resonant bass; another, farther away, joined in the refrain of the second couplet, soon the chorus swelled, each taking his part as he worked, and a beautiful matutinal song greeted the god of day.

Pippo's house was situated on the Esclavons quay not far from the Nani palace, at the angle of one of the smaller canals; at that instant the prow of an approaching gondola glittered through the fog which still obscured the water. On the poop could be seen a single boatman, but the frail bark cut through the water with the speed of an arrow, seeming to glide over the smooth surface as over a mirror, as its oars followed the cadence of the morning song. Passing under the bridge which separates the canal from the grand lagoon, the gondola stopped. A masked woman, tall and of noble mien, stepped out and proceeded toward the quay. Pippo descended and advanced toward her.

"Is it you?" he asked in a low voice.

In reply she took his extended hand and followed him. None of the servants were to be seen ; without a word they traversed the lower gallery where the porter slept. Reaching the young man's room, the lady seated herself on a sofa and remained pensive for some moments. She removed her mask. Pippo then realized that Signora Dorothea had not deceived him, for he saw before him one of the most beautiful women of Venice, the heiress of two noble families, Beatrice Loredan, widow of the procurator, Donato.

V

It is impossible to describe the beauty of Beatrice as she glanced about the room after removing her mask. Although she had been a widow for eighteen months, she was but twenty-four years of age, and while the step she was taking may strike the reader as being rather bold, it was the first time she had been guilty of any thing approaching indiscretion ; it is certain that up to that time she had loved no one but her husband. This step had troubled her to such an extent that she had been obliged to summon all her powers to her assistance or she would have turned back before it was too late ; and now her eyes were full of love, of confusion, and of courage.

Pippo was so much affected that he could not speak. Under certain circumstances it is impossible to look on a woman who is perfectly beautiful without astonishment and respect. Pippo had often met Beatrice at the more exclusive gatherings in Venice. He had heard a hundred eulogies on her beauty. She was the daughter of Pierre Loredan, member of the Council of Ten, and granddaughter of the famous Loredan who took such an active part in the trial of Jacques Fosquari. The pride of that family was only too well known at Venice, and Beatrice was supposed to inherit the spirit of her ancestor. She had been married when quite young to the procurator Donato whose death left her in full possession of a large fortune. The first seigniors of the republic aspired to her hand, but she replied to the efforts they made to please her by a disdainful indifference. In a word her almost savage haughtiness had passed into a proverb. Pippo was, therefore, doubly surprised, for while on one side he had never dared to suspect that his mysterious conquest was Beatrice Donato, on the other it seemed to him that he had never seen her before, so much did she differ from the Beatrice of common consent. Love, which lends a charm to the plainest face, showed itself all-powerful at that moment in thus embellishing one of nature's masterpieces.

After some moments of silence, Pippo approached the lady and took her hand. He attempted to convey to her some idea of his surprise and gratitude, but she made no response and did not even seem to understand. She stood motionless and silent as though in dream-land. He spoke to her several times but she made no movement; so he placed his arms around her and seated himself at her side.

"You sent me to-day," he said, "a kiss in a rose; on a flower more beautiful and fresh allow me to return what I have received."

With these words he kissed her lips. She made no effort to prevent him, but her eyes, which had been wandering, now lighted on Pippo. She gently repulsed him, shaking her head with a sadness that was full of grace:

"You do not love me, your expression of tenderness is but a caprice; but I love you and I wish to get down on my knees before you."

She actually bent down before him; Pippo vainly endeavored to restrain her. She slipped from his arms and kneeled on the inlaid floor.

Ordinarily a man does not like to see a woman take that humble attitude. Although it be a mark of love it seems to belong exclusively to man; it is a painful attitude that one can not contemplate without emotion, and one that sometimes softens the severity of a judge. Pippo looked with surprise upon the admirable

spectacle before him. If the mere sight of Beatrice had commanded his respect, what ought he to feel upon seeing her at his feet? The widow of Donato, the daughter of the Loredans was on her knees. Her velvet robe, sown with silver flowers, covered the wooden mosaic at his feet; her hair, escaping from its confining veil, streamed down her back. Within that beautiful frame could be seen her white shoulders and joined hands, while her humid eyes were turned up to his. Deeply moved, he recoiled some steps, experiencing all the enervation of pride. He was not noble; the proud patrician lay before him despoiled of her power; the idea passed like a flash through his mind.

It was but a flash and lasted but an instant. Such a sight ought to inspire something more than vanity. When we lean over a limpid stream our image is reflected and we behold a brother in the water before us. Thus in the human soul love calls to love and is born in a glance. Pippo threw himself on his knees. Thus kneeling the one before the other, they exchanged their first kisses.

If Beatrice was the daughter of the Loredans, the gentler blood of her mother, Bianca Contarini, flowed through her veins. Never has better creature lived in this world than that mother, who was also one of the beauties of Venice. Always happy and engaging, thinking only of

comfort and contentment in times of peace, and in times of war a lover of her country, Bianca seemed the elder sister of her daughters. She died young and was beautiful in death.

It was through her that Beatrice had learned to know and to love the arts, and especially painting. Not that the young widow had become much of a savant on the subject. She had visited Rome and Florence and the masterpieces of Michael Angelo had inspired in her nothing but curiosity. As a Roman, she loved Raphael, but a daughter of the Adriatic, she preferred Titian. While others about her were busy with the intrigues of court or the affairs of the republic she was interested in new pictures and in the destiny of her favorite art after the death of old Vicellio. She had seen in the Dolphin palace the painting referred to in the first part of this story, the only work Tizianello had produced and which had been destroyed in the burning of the palace. After having admired that canvas, she met Pippo at Signora Dorothea's and conceived an irresistible passion for him.

Painting in the time of Jules II. and Leon X. was not a *metier* as it is to-day; it was a religion with the artist, an enlightened taste with the grand seigniors, a glory for Italy, and a passion for women. When a pope left the Vatican to visit Buonarroti, the daughter of a

noble Venetian could, without shame, love Tizianello; but Beatrice had conceived a project which elevated and emboldened her passion. She wished to make of Titian more than a lover, she wished to make him a great painter. She knew what an irregular life he was leading and she resolved to win him from it. She knew that in him, in spite of his many follies, the sacred fire of the arts was not extinct but only covered with ashes and she hoped that love would rekindle the divine spark. She had waited an entire year, secretly nursing that idea, meeting Pippo from time to time, watching him from her window as he passed along the quay. A caprice took possession of her; she embroidered a purse and sent it to him. She promised herself, it is true, not to go farther, never to attempt more. But when Signora Dorothea showed her the verses that Pippo had composed in her honor, she shed tears of joy. She was aware of the risk she was running in trying to realize her dream, but it was a woman's dream and as she left her house she said to herself: "What woman wills, God wills."

Sustained by that thought, by her love and by her sincerity, she felt herself sheltered from fear. In kneeling before Pippo she had offered her first prayer to love; but after the sacrifice of her pride, the god became impatient and demanded another. She did not hesitate to

become Tizianello's mistress any longer than if she were his wife. She removed her veil and placed it on a statue of Venus which stood near; then, as beautiful and also as pale as the marble goddess, she abandoned herself to her fate.

She passed the day with Pippo as though it was quite conventional. At sunset the gondola which had brought her in the morning, called to take her away. She departed as secretly as she had entered. The servants had been sent away on one pretext or another; the porter alone remained in the house. Accustomed to his master's manner of life, he was not astonished to see a masked woman cross the gallery with Pippo. But when he saw the lady raise her mask while Pippo kissed her adieu, he advanced noiselessly and listened.

"Have you never seen me before?" she gaily asked.

"Yes," replied Pippo, "but I do not recognize your face; you yourself do not know how beautiful you are."

"Nor you. You are as beautiful as the day, a thousand times more beautiful than I supposed. Will you love me?"

"Yes, and a long time."

"And I, always."

With these words they separated, and Pippo stood on the step, following with his eyes the gondola which bore away Beatrice Donato.

VI

Fifteen days passed and Beatrice had not spoken of the project she had conceived. To tell the truth she had almost forgotten it herself. The first days of an amorous liaison resemble the voyages of the Spanish explorers at the time of the discovery of the new world. Upon embarking they promised their government to follow precise instructions, to bring back plans for civilizing America ; but no sooner had they arrived when the aspect of an unknown sky, a virgin forest, a mine of gold or of silver, destroyed all memory of the past. To run after the new, they forgot the promises they had made to Europe, but they discovered a treasure; thus do lovers sometimes act.

Another motive might be mentioned as an excuse for Beatrice. For fifteen days Pippo had not gambled, nor had he once visited the Countess Orsini. It was the beginning of wisdom ; Beatrice thought so and I do not know whether she was right or wrong. Pippo passed half of the day at his mistress' side and the other half, looking at the sea and drinking Samos wine at the Lido cabaret. His friends saw nothing of him ; he broke off all his former habits, and kept no account of time, nor of his actions ; he sated himself, in other words, in a profound

forgetfulness of everything except the first kisses of a beautiful woman; can one say, in such a case, whether a man is a sage or a fool?

To use an expression which everyone else used, Pippo and Beatrice were made for one another; they recognized the fact the first day, but still time was required to convince them of it, and a month sufficed. A month passed, then, before the subject of painting was broached. Instead of painting it was a question of love, of music and of walks in the country. The fine ladies sometimes prefer a secret pleasure party in an inn, to a little supper in the boudoir. Beatrice was of that mind and enjoyed more than a dinner with a doge, a fresh fish eaten tête-a-tête with Pippo under the trees at Quintavalle. After the little dinner, they would board a gondola and float about the Isle of Armenia; it is there, between the city and the Lido, between the sky and the sea, that I advise the reader to go, by the clear light of the moon, and make love to a Venitienne. .

One day at the end of the month, Beatrice came secretly to Pippo and found him more joyous than ever. When she entered he had just finished his breakfast and was walking up and down his room singing; the sun which lighted his chamber shone full on a silver dish filled with sequins. He had played at dice the evening before and won fifteen hundred piastres

from Vespasiano. With that sum he had bought a Chinese fan, perfumed gloves and a gold chain made in Venice and admirably wrought; he placed them all in a cedar coffer, set with mother-of-pearl, which he offered to Beatrice.

At first she received the gift with joy, but when she learned that he had won the money with which it was purchased at dice, she did not wish to receive it. Perhaps she thought that his love had grown less since he had returned to his former pleasures. Whatever the cause, she saw that it was time to speak, and to attempt to induce him to give up the bad habits into which he had fallen.

It was not an easy thing to do. In a month she had learned much of Pippo's character. He was extremely nonchalant in the ordinary concerns of life and he practiced *far niente* with delight; but in more important matters it was not easy to manage him, on account of that very indolence of his; for when anyone tried to control him, instead of struggling he pursued a policy of *laissez faire*, and did not change his course in the least. To accomplish her end Beatrice had recourse to a stratagem; she asked him if he would like to paint her portrait.

He readily consented; the next day he bought a canvas, and ordered a beautiful sculptured oak easel which belonged to his father to be brought into his room. Beatrice arrived in the

morning, arrayed in an ample brown dress which she removed when Pippo was ready to go to work. She then appeared in a costume very similar to that with which Paride Bordone has invested his "Crowned Venus." Her hair, skillfully coiled and sown with pearls, fell in long wavy ringlets over her arms and shoulders. A necklace of pearls descending almost to her girdle, which was clasped with a golden buckle in the center of her breast, designed the perfect contour of her form. Her dress of taffeta, changing into blue and rose, was relieved at the knee by a ruby clasp, revealing a portion of a limb which resembled polished marble. She wore beads, richly carved bracelets and velvet slippers, scarlet-colored and laced with gold.

Bordone's Venus, as every one knows, was nothing else than a Venetian woman; and that painter, a pupil of Titian, had a great reputation in Italy. But Beatrice, who was perhaps acquainted with his model, knew very well that she was more beautiful. She wished to arouse Pippo's emulation, and thus show him that it was possible to surpass Bordone.

"By the blood of Diana!" cried the young man, when he had examined her a moment, "the 'Crowned Venus' is only a fish-wife of the Arsenal disguised as a goddess; but here is the

mother of Love and the mistress of the God of War."

One may easily believe that his first desire upon seeing such a beautiful model was not to set to work painting it. Beatrice feared at first that she was too beautiful and had employed the wrong means to succeed in her work of reform. Nevertheless, the portrait was begun although the hand of the artist was unsteady. Pippo chanced to let fall his brush; Beatrice picked it up and returned it to her lover saying:

"Your father's brush thus fell from his hand and Charles V. returned it to him; I wish to do as Cæsar, although I am no empress."

Pippo had felt the deepest affection and admiration for his father and never spoke of him but with respect. This reference to the poet made a deep impression on him. He arose and opened a chest:

"Here is the brush of which you speak," he said, showing it to Beatrice; "my poor father preserved it as a relic, since no hand but that of the master of half the world has touched it."

"Were you present at that scene?" asked Beatrice; "and could you describe the incident?"

"I was quite young," replied Pippo, "but I remember it. It was at Bologna. There had been an interview between the emperor and the

pope concerning the Duchy of Florence, or rather, the fate of Italy. Paul III. and Charles V. were seen conversing on a terrace and the entire town was silent. At the end of an hour everything was decided; a great noise of men and horses succeeded to the silence. No one knew what was going to happen, and everyone wished to know; but the deepest mystery prevailed; the inhabitants regarded the smallest officers of either court with curiosity and terror; there was talk of the dismemberment of Italy, of exiles and of new principalities. My father was working at a great picture and was on the top of a ladder which he used in painting, when some halberdiers, pike in hand, opened the door and stationed themselves about the room. A page entered and cried in a loud voice: 'Cæsar!' A few minutes later the emperor appeared, arrayed in royal doublet, and smiling behind his red beard. My father, surprised and charmed at this unexpected visit, descended as quickly as possible from his ladder; he was old; leaning on the handrail to support himself, he dropped his brush. Everyone remained motionless for the presence of the emperor had turned us into statues. My father was confused by his awkwardness, but he feared that a hasty step might cause him to fall; Charles V. stepped forward, stooped down and picked up the brush.

"'Titian,' he said in a clear and imperious voice, 'merits the service of a Cæsar,' and with a majesty truly unequalled, he returned the brush to my father who kneeled to receive it."

After this recital which Pippo could not make without emotion, Beatrice remained silent for some moments; she bowed her head and seemed so distraught that he asked her of what she was thinking.

"I was thinking of one thing," she replied. "Charles V. is dead, and his son is now King of Spain. What would be said of Philip II. if, instead of bearing his father's sword he allowed it to rust in a chest?"

Pippo smiled and although he understood Beatrice's thought he asked her what she meant by that.

"I mean," she replied, "that you also are the son of a king, for Bordone, Moretto, and Romanino are good painters; Timoret and Giorgione were artists; but Titian was a king; and now who bears his sceptre?"

"My brother, Orazio, would have been a great painter," replied Pippo, "if he had lived."

"Doubtless," rejoined Beatrice, "and this is what will be said of the sons of Titian: 'One would have been great if he had lived, and the other if he had desired to be.'"

"Do you think so?" said Pippo, laughing. "Very well, this is what will be added: 'But

he preferred to ride in a gondola with Beatrice Donato.'"

As Beatrice was not expecting this reply she was somewhat disconcerted. She did not lose courage, however, but resumed in a more serious tone :

"Listen to me and do not trifle. The only painting you have produced has been admired. There is no one who does not regret its loss; but the life you lead is something worse than the fire at the Dolphin palace, for it is consuming you. You think of nothing but amusement and you do not reflect that what would be merely a mistake for others is a shame for you. The son of a rich merchant may cash dice but not Tizianello. What matters it that you know as much as our older painters, and that you have the youth which fails them? You have only to try, to succeed, and you do not try. Your friends deceive you but I do my duty in telling you that you outrage your father's memory ; and who should tell you this if not I? The richer you are the more readily will people assist you to ruin yourself; the more beautiful you are, the more the women will love you; but what will become of you if, while you are young, someone does not tell you the truth? I am your mistress, my dear seignior, but I wish also to be your lover. Would to God you were born poor! If you love me, work. In a remote cor-

ner of the city I have found a quiet little house, with only one story. We shall furnish it, if you wish, to suit our taste and we shall have two keys, one for you and one for me. There we shall fear no one and we shall be at liberty. You will have an easel sent to this place and if you will promise to work two hours a day I will come to see you every day. Will you have enough patience for that? If you accept, in a years time you will perhaps no longer love me, but you will have formed habits of industry and there will be one more great name for Italy. If you refuse, I can not cease to love you, but I will understand that you do not love me."

Beatrice trembled as she spoke. She feared offending her lover and yet she had imposed on herself the obligation of expressing herself without reserve. This fear and the desire to please made her eyes sparkle. She no longer resembled Venus but one of the Muses. Pippo did not reply at once; he found her so beautiful thus that he left her some moments in anxiety. To tell the truth he had not listened to the remonstrances so much as to the voice, that penetrating voice which charmed him. Beatrice had thrown her whole being into her words, speaking in the purest Tuscan with Venetian smoothness. When a lively arietta comes from a beautiful mouth we do not pay much attention to the words; it is sometimes more agree-

able not to hear them distinctly in order that the attention may be concentrated on the music. That was Pippo's idea. Without thinking of what she had said he approached Beatrice, kissed her forehead, and replied :

"Anything you wish, for you are as beautiful as an angel."

It was agreed that from that day Pippo would work regularly. Beatrice wanted him to pledge himself in writing. She produced a tablet and tracing some lines with loving pride,

"You know," she said, "that we Loredans keep good accounts and never forget.* I set you down here as my debtor for two hours of work per day for one year from date ; sign and pay me in order that I may know that you love me."

Pippo signed with good grace. "But it is understood," he said, "that I am to begin by painting your portrait."

Beatrice kissed him in her turn and whispered in his ear :

"And I shall paint a portrait of you, a beautiful likeness which I shall ever preserve in my memory."

*When Foscari was tried, Jacques Loredan, son of Pierre, believed or feigned to believe that the family losses had been avenged. In the account books (for he was engaged in commerce, as almost all patricians were at that epoch) he had inscribed in his own hand the name of the doge among his debtors, "for the death of my father and my uncle." On the other side of the account was a blank page for the entry of the payment of the debt, and after the death of the doge this entry was actually made: *D'ha payata*, "he has paid."

[Daru, History of Venetian Republic.

VII

The love of Pippo and Beatrice might at first have been compared with a stream which has escaped from its course; it now resembled a brook creeping along its bed in the sand. If Pippo had been noble he would certainly have married Beatrice, for the better he became acquainted with her, the more he loved her; but although the Vicelli were of good family in Cadore, such a union was *not* to be thought of. Not only Beatrice's relatives would be opposed to it, but all the patricians of Venice would be indignant. Those who willingly tolerated love intrigues, and who did not find fault with a noble lady for becoming a painter's mistress, would never pardon that lady if she should marry her lover. Such were the prejudices of that epoch, prejudices which were, however, less objectionable than ours.

The little house was furnished; Pippo kept his word, going there to work every day. To say that he worked would be too much, but he seemed to work, or rather he thought he was working. Beatrice, on her part, fulfilled more than she promised, for she was always the first to arrive. The portrait was begun: it advanced slowly but it was on the easel and, although it was seldom touched it, fulfilled the office of

witness and served to encourage love or excuse idleness.

Every morning Beatrice sent Pippo a bouquet by her negress in order to accustom him to rising at a good hour.

"A painter," she said to him, "ought to rise with the sun. The light of the sun is the life and the very element of his art, since he can do nothing without it."

The admonition struck Pippo as being just, but he found the application difficult. So he had fallen into the habit of putting the bouquet which the negress brought him, into a glass of sweetened water placed on the table the night before and then going to sleep again. When, in order to reach the little studio, he passed under the Countess Orsini's windows, he could hear his money jingling in his pockets. One day he met Vespasiano who asked why he had stopped gambling.

"I have made an oath never to touch a dice-box," he replied, "nor handle a card; but since we have so happily met, let us play at matching coins or heads-or-tails for the amount we have with us."

Sir Vespasiano, although an old man and a notary, was the very god of gaming incarnate. He threw a piastre into the air, lost thirty sequins and still was not satisfied.

"What a pity," thought Pippo, "that I do

not gamble any more! I am sure that Beatrice's purse would continue to bring me good luck and that I would win in eight days all I have lost in two years."

However, he took pleasure in obeying his mistress. His little studio was bright and attractive. He found himself in a new atmosphere there, and yet there was something reminiscent about it, for the canvas and easel recalled his childhood days. The things which have been familiar to us in infancy, easily return to us, and that facility, joined to memory renders them dear to us, we know not why. When Pippo took up his palette and, one beautiful morning began to mix his colors, and looking about him saw at his hand all the appointments of an atelier, he thought he could hear the rude voice of his father saying: "Come, you good-for-nothing fellow, what are you dreaming about? Get to work, at once!" He turned his head and instead of the severe face of Titian he saw Beatrice with bare arms and bosom, her forehead crowned with pearls, preparing to pose before him, and saying, with a smile:

"Whenever you are ready, my lord."

But it must not be inferred that he was indifferent to her counsel or that she was sparing in it. She talked with him about the Venetian masters, of the glorious place they had won in the schools of Italy; of the grandeur

art had attained and of its decadence. It was only too true that decadence had set in; for Venice was doing what Florence had done: she was losing not only her glory but her respect for her glory. Michael Angelo and Titian had both lived nearly a century; after having instructed their country in the Arts, they struggled against disorder so long as human patience can; but these two old columns had at last crumbled. In order to raise to the clouds some innovator of the day, the two cities forgot the old masters almost as soon as they were buried. Brescia and Cremona opened new schools which they proclaimed superior to the old. In Venice, the son of one of Titian's pupils, usurping the surname given to Pippo, had himself called Tizianello and filled with his wretched works the patriarchal church.

When Pippo himself cared nothing for the national shame, it is not surprising that the scandal increased. When anyone boasted of a poor picture, or when he found in some church, a miserable daub beside his father's masterpieces, he experienced the same displeasure that a patrician would have felt on seeing the name of a bastard inscribed in the book of gold. Beatrice understood that displeasure, and women always have more or less of the instinct of Dalilah; they instinctively know how to solve the secret of Samson's strength. While always re-

specting the sacred names, Beatrice took occasion, from time to time, to eulogize some mediocre painter. It was not easy to thus contradict her real opinions but she made these false eulogies with such skill that they had an air of truth. In this way she aroused Pippo's ire and she noticed that when he was in bad humor he would work with extraordinary energy. He would display the boldness of a master, and impatience inspired him. But his frivolous propensities soon resumed their sway ; he would suddenly throw down his pencil and exclaim :

"Come, let us go and drink a glass of Cyprian wine and speak no more of these stupid things."

Such inconstancy would perhaps have discouraged any one but Beatrice ; but since history records so many instances of the tenacity of hatred, we should not be astonished at the persevering power of love. Beatrice was sure of one thing, the influence of habit, and this is how she acquired that conviction. She had seen her father, a man of great wealth and feeble health, subject himself in his old age to incessant toil in order to increase by some few sequins his immense fortune. She had often begged him to spare himself, but always received the same reply : that his habits had been formed in childhood, that hard work was essential to his happiness and that he would work

as long as he lived. Instructed by that example, Beatrice believed that Pippo could acquire habits of industry, and she told herself that the love of glory is a noble passion that ought to be as strong as love.

In thinking thus she was not deceived, but the difficulty lay in this, that, to teach Pippo good habits it was necessary to break up the bad. For there are weeds that can be easily rooted out, of which gambling is not one; perhaps it is the only passion that can resist love, for ambitions, desires, and superstitions often yield to woman's will, but the passion for gambling very rarely, and the reason is plain. Just as coined money represents nearly all pleasures, gambling resumes almost all the emotions; each card, each throw of the dice involves the loss or gain of a certain number of pieces of money, and each of these pieces is the sign of some indeterminate pleasure. He who wins, therefore, not only experiences a multitude of desires, but actually creates new ones, having the means to satisfy them. Hence the despair of him who loses and who suddenly finds himself deprived of the power to satisfy those desires which the hope of the possession of a large sum had created. Such experiences so often repeated, exhaust and at the same time exalt the mind, throwing it into a sort of vertigo, and ordinary sensations become too feeble, they

present themselves in an order too regular to interest the gambler, accustomed as he is to concentration.

Happily for Pippo his father had left him too rich for loss and gain to exercise such a dangerous influence over him. Idleness rather than vice had been his temptation; he was, moreover, too young to be beyond the possibility of cure, and the very inconstancy of his tastes proved it; it was not impossible to correct his faults with careful attention. The necessity of this attention had not escaped Beatrice, and without troubling herself about her own reputation she often passed the entire day with her lover. On the other hand, in order that habit might not engender satiety she employed all her resources of feminine coquetry; her attire, her manner, her words, even, varied incessantly. Pippo was not so stupid as to let her know that he noticed these stratagems, but on the contrary he adopted the same course himself; he changed humor and manner as often as his collar. But in order to do that he had no need of studying, for nature predisposed him to change and variety. He sometimes smilingly observed:

"A gudgeon is a little fish, and a caprice is a little passion."

Living thus and loving pleasure, our lovers came to understand each other perfectly. Only

one thing troubled Beatrice. Everytime she spoke to Pippo about the future, he merely replied:

"Let us begin with your portrait."

"I ask nothing better," she would reply, "and we agreed on that sometime ago. But what progress are you making? That portrait can not be exposed in public, and when it is finished we must think of something that will make you known. Have you any subject in mind? Shall it be religious or historical?"

When she asked such questions, he always found some distraction that would prevent him from understanding her, as for example, he would stoop to pick up his handkerchief, arrange his doublet, or some other bagatelle. She began to believe that it was an artist's mystery and that he did not care to divulge his plans; but no one was less mysterious than he or more confiding, at least with his mistress, for there is no love without confidence. "Is it possible that he would deceive me," she wondered, "is his complaisance only a trick and has he no intention of keeping his word?"

When that doubt came to her mind she would become grave and almost haughty:

"I have your promise," she would say; "you have engaged yourself for a year and now we shall see if you are a man of your word."

But before she could conclude, Pippo would kiss her tenderly and repeat :

"Let us begin with your portrait."

Then he would talk about something else.

At the end of six weeks the portrait was nearly done ; while Beatrice was posing for the last seance she was so happy that she could hardly keep her position ; she passed to and from the easel and uttered many exclamations of delight. Pippo worked slowly and shook his head from time to time ; suddenly he frowned and passed over the canvas the piece of linen he used in drying his brushes. Beatrice hastened to his side and saw that he had effaced the mouth and eyes. She was so astounded and dismayed that she could not restrain her tears ; but Pippo quietly set about arranging his colors in the box :

"The expression of the eyes and the smile are extremely difficult to reproduce ; one must be inspired before attempting them. I feel that my hand is not sure enough and I do not know that it will ever be."

So the portrait remained thus disfigured, and everytime Beatrice looked at that head without a mouth or eyes her anxiety increased.

VIII

The reader has perhaps observed that Pippo liked Greek wines. Now, although the Oriental wines are not exhilarating, Pippo was accustomed to talk freely at the dessert. Beatrice always managed to turn the conversation to the subject of painting ; but when that subject came up one of two things happened ; Pippo would either become silent and then he had a certain smile on his lips that Beatrice did not like, or he would speak of the arts with singular indifference and disdain. A strange idea would sometimes occur to him in these conversations.

"There is one picture that ought to be painted," he would say ; "it would represent the Campo-Vaccino at Rome at sunset. The horizon is vast, the spot deserted. In the foreground are children playing among the ruins ; in the background can be seen the passing figure of a young man enveloped in a cloak ; his face is pale, the delicate lines drawn with suffering ; in seeing him one must feel instinctively that he is about to die. In one hand he holds a palette and brushes, the other rests upon the shoulder of a young woman who turns her head and smiles. In order to explain that scene it would be necessary to write below the date, 'Good Friday, 1520.'"

Beatrice readily understood the meaning of

that enigma. It was on Good Friday of the year 1520, that Raphael died at Rome and, although every effort was made to conceal the fact, it is certain that he died in his mistress' arms. The picture in Pippo's mind represented Raphael at the time of his approaching end; such a subject treated with simplicity by a true artist would have been beautiful. But Beatrice knew how to interpret this supposed plan and read in her lover's eyes what he wished her to understand.

While all Italy joined in deploring that event, Pippo, on the contrary, boasted of it and often remarked that in spite of Raphael's genius his death was more beautiful than his life.

The idea shocked Beatrice, although she could not help smiling at it; it meant that love was worth more than glory and if such an idea is to be opposed by a woman, she surely can not be offended by it. If Pippo had chosen another subject, Beatrice might have agreed with him.

"But why, said she, "do you oppose one to the other, two things which sympathize so well? Love and glory are brother and sister; why do you separate them?"

"No one can do two things at a time," rejoined Pippo. "You would not advise a merchant to compose verses while engaged in business calculations, nor would you expect the

poet to measure cloth while seeking for rhymes. Why, then, do you wish me to paint when I am in love?"

Beatrice did not know what to reply, for she did not dare say that love was not an occupation.

"Do you want to die like Raphael?" she asked. "If so, why do you not begin as he did."

"It is, on the contrary, the fear of dying like Raphael that prevents me from emulating his example. Either Raphael did wrong to fall in love, being a painter, or he did wrong to paint, being in love. That is why he died at thirty-seven; in a glorious manner it is true, but there is no good way to die. If he had produced some fifty less masterpieces, that would have been a misfortune for the pope who would have been obliged to have his chapel decorated by another; but Fornarine would have had fifty kisses more and Raphael would have avoided the odor of oil colors which is so injurious to the health."

"Will you make a Fornarine of me?" cried Beatrice; "if you care for neither your glory nor your life, do you expect me to take the trouble to bury you?"

"No, indeed," replied Pippo, raising his glass to his lips; "if I had the power to metamorphose you, I would change you into a Staphyle."*

*A nymph of whom Bacchus was amorous. He changed her into a grapevine.

In spite of his affected gayety Pippo was not joking so much as one might suppose. Beneath this raillery there lay a reasonable opinion ; and this is what he really believed.

It has often been remarked with what facility the great artists execute their work and instances are cited where great industry has been attended with apparent disorder and even idleness. But there is no greater error than that. It is not impossible that a practised painter, sure of his hand and of his reputation, should succeed in making a beautiful sketch in the midst of distractions and pleasures. Da Vinci sometimes painted, it is said, with a lyre in one hand and a brush in the other, but the celebrated portrait of Joconde remained four years on his easel. In spite of rare *tours de force*, which as a result, are much boasted of, it is certain that what is really beautiful is the work of time and of meditation, and that there is no real genius without patience.

Pippo was convinced of the truth of that rule and his father's example had confirmed him in his opinion. In fact no bolder painter ever lived than Titian, unless it be his pupil, Rubens ; but if Titian's hand was quick, his thought was patient. During his ninety-nine years of life he occupied himself constantly with his art. At first he painted with a timid minuteness and a dryness that made his works resemble the

gothic pictures of Albert Dürer. It was only after long experience that he dared obey his genius and give his brush full sway; and he sometimes learned to regret this freedom and it happened that Michael Angelo upon seeing one of his works expressed his regret that the principles of design were neglected at Venice.

Now at the time of my story a deplorable facility, which is always the first sign of decadence, reigned at Venice. Pippo, sustained by the name he bore, together with his boldness and attainments, could easily and promptly have rendered himself illustrious, but that was precisely what he did not wish. He considered it a shameful thing to profit by the ignorance of the vulgar; he said to himself, and with truth, that the son of an architect ought not to demolish what his father had built, and that, if Titian's son became a painter, it was his duty to oppose the decadence of painting.

But to undertake such a task would require the consecration of his entire life. Would he succeed? It was not certain. One man's strength is small when an entire century struggles against him; he is borne on by the multitude like a swimmer in the whirlpool. What could he accomplish? Pippo was not ignorant of his own powers; he foresaw that courage would fail him sooner or later, and that his past pleasures would drag him down; he would, therefore, run

the risk of making a useless sacrifice, let that sacrifice be complete or incomplete; and what fruit would he gather? He was young, rich, healthy, and had a beautiful mistress; in order to live happily in such a manner that no one could, after all, reproach him, he had only to allow the sun to rise and set. Ought he to renounce so much that was good for a doubtful glory which would probably escape him?

It was after mature deliberation that Pippo had taken the part which had, little by little, become natural. "If I study twenty years," said he, "and if I attempt to imitate my father, I shall sing to the deaf; if my strength fails me, I shall dishonor my name." And with his customary gayety he concluded: "To the devil with painting! Life is too short."

While he was disputing with Beatrice, the portrait remained unfinished. Pippo chanced one day to enter the convent of the Servites. On a scaffold erected in the chapel he spied the son of Marco Vicellio, he who, as I have already explained, had assumed the name of Tizianello. That young man had not the slightest excuse for taking that name, except the fact that he was a distant relative and that he called himself by his Christian name, Tito, of which he had made Titian, and of Titian, Tizianello, in order that the idlers of Venice might consider him the heir of the great painter and go into

ecstasies over his frescoes. Pippo had never troubled himself about that ridiculous assumption; but at that moment, whether because he was annoyed at finding himself face to face with that person, or because he realized his own value more than ordinarily, he approached the scaffolding which was supported by some small posts badly stayed; he pushed one of these posts with his foot and it fell; fortunately the scaffolding did not fall at the same time, but it shook so violently that the psuedo Tizianello tottered for a moment like a drunken man and then fell in the midst of his colors, with which he was marked in a manner that did not add to his dignity.

One can easily imagine his wrath when he arose. He at once descended from his scaffolding and advanced toward Pippo breathing out threats and slaughter. A priest threw himself between them, at the moment they were about to draw their swords in the sacred place; the worshippers fled in terror, making rapid signs of the cross, while the curious hastened to the spot. Tito cried out in a loud voice that a man had tried to murder him and pointed to the fallen post as proof of his accusation. The crowd began to murmur and one, more bold than the others, tried to lay hold of Pippo's collar. Pippo who had acted through mere caprice, and who had been laughing at Tito's

ridiculous appearance, seeing himself about to be dragged to prison as an assassin, now became angry in his turn. Rudely repulsing those who were trying to arrest him, he rushed upon Tito:

"It is you," he cried seizing him, "it is you who ought to be taken by the collar and dragged to Saint Marks and hanged like a common thief. Do you know whom you are dealing with, you borrower of names? My name is Pomponio Vicellio, son of Titian. I have just kicked over one of the posts of your worm-eaten scaffold, but if my father had been in my place you may rest assured, that in order to teach you to call yourself Tizianello, he would have shaken your tree until you would have fallen like a rotten apple. But he would not have stopped there. In order to treat you as you deserve he would have taken you by the ear, insolent schoolboy, and he would have taken you into the studio from which you have escaped without knowing how to design a head. What right have you to disfigure the walls of this convent and then sign my name to your wretched frescoes? Go study anatomy and copy figures for ten years as I have done, I with my father, and we shall see who you are and if you have a signature. But until that time I warn you not to take the name which belongs to me,

or I will throw you into the canal in order to baptize you once for all!"

Pippo left the church with these words. When the crowd heard his name, they immediately became calm; they opened a passage for him and followed him out. He proceeded to the rendezvous where he found Beatrice awaiting him. Without taking time to recount his adventure, he seized his palette and still shaken with wrath he set to work on the portrait.

In less than an hour he had finished it. He had made some great changes; he cut out some of the details which he considered too minute; he arranged the drapery with more freedom, retouched the background and the accessories, parts which are very important in Venetian paintings. He then came to the eyes and mouth, which he succeeded in drawing to his satisfaction with a few rapid strokes of the brush. The glance was sweet and proud; the lips, above which appeared a light down, were opened; the teeth shone as pearls and a word seemed about to escape.

"You will not be called 'Venus Crowned,'" he said when he had finished, "but 'Venus in Love.'"

One can guess Beatrice's joy; while Pippo was working she had hardly dared to breathe; she kissed him and thanked him a hundred times and told him that in the future she would

not call him Tizianello but Titian. During the rest of the day, she spoke of nothing but the countless beauties which she discovered each moment in the portrait; not only did she regret that it was not to be exposed but she was ready to ask that it might be. The evening was passed at Quintavalle and never were two lovers happier. Pippo was as joyful as a child and it was at a late hour after many protestations of love that Beatrice decided to return.

She did not sleep that night; the most delightful projects, the sweetest hopes, filled her mind. She already saw her dreams realized, her lover boasted of and envied by all Italy, and Venice indebted to him for new glory. On the morrow she was, as usual, first at the rendezvous; while waiting for Pippo she began to examine her portrait. The background of the picture was a landscape, and in the foreground was a rock. On that rock Beatrice perceived some lines traced in cinnabar. She leaned forward and anxiously deciphered them; in gothic characters, finely drawn, was written the following sonnet:

Here Beatrice stands, whose form reveals
Such earthly beauty and such heavenly grace;
Whose bosom in its snowy whiteness seals
A heart that meets the promise of her face.
Now Titian's son, to win her deathless fame,
Made this a pledge of love and constancy,
And then he ceased to paint lest other name
Should share her blessed immortality.

And you who chance to look upon this face,
If heart you have to feel and eyes to see,
Oh! tell me can you wonder at the trace
Which love has left upon a heart less free?
How small a thing is glory, learn from this;
I give it all for my sweet model's kiss !

In spite of Beatrice's efforts she could not induce her lover to undertake another work; he was insensible to all her prayers and when she urged him too hard he would recite his sonnet. He remained thus faithful to his idleness up to the time of his death; and Beatrice, they say, was faithful to her love. They lived together a long time, and it is to be regretted that, the pride of the Loredans being wounded by that public liaison, they destroyed the portrait of Beatrice as chance had destroyed the first picture of Tizianello.

CROISILLES

I

In the beginning of the reign of Louis XV, a young man by the name of Croisilles, the son of a goldsmith, returned from Paris to Havre, his native town. He had been entrusted by his father with the settlement of a business affair, and he had brought the affair to a happy termination. The joy of bearing good news led him to pursue his way more merrily and, perhaps, more slowly than usual ; for, although he had a considerable sum of money in his pocket, he traveled on foot for the pleasure of it. He was a youth of sunny temperament and one who did not lack in intelligence, although he was at times so heedless and absent-minded that he passed for something of a fool. His waistcoat buttoned awry, his perruque flying at the mercy of the wind, his hat under his arm, he followed the bank of the Seine, now dreaming, now singing, rising at break of day, dining at the inns

along the route and charmed with his journey through one of the most delightful regions of France. Whilst pilfering the apple orchards along his route, he was turning sundry rhymes over and over in his head (for every mad-brained youth is something of a poet), and he tried to compose a madrigal for a certain beautiful young lady in Havre. This young lady was none other than the daughter of a farmer-general, Mademoiselle Godeau, the pearl of Havre, a rich heiress who had many suitors. Croisilles had never entered the Godeau mansion except on business; he had once delivered there some jewelry purchased at his father's shop. M. Godeau, whose comparatively obscure name feebly supported an immense fortune, avenged by his arrogance the wrong done him by fate and showed himself on all occasions enormously and pitilessly rich. He was not the man to receive in his home the son of a goldsmith; but as Mademoiselle Godeau had the most beautiful eyes in the world, as Croisilles was not badly formed, and as there is nothing to hinder a fine youth from falling in love with a beautiful girl, Croisilles adored Mademoiselle Godeau, who did not appear to be displeased. So he was thinking of her while making his way along the road to Havre, and, as he was not in the habit of indulging in prudent forethought, instead of reflecting on the

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obstacles which separated him from his well-beloved, he stupidly abandoned himself to the pleasure of seeking a rhyme for her christian name. Mademoiselle Godeau's name was Julie, and the rhyme was easily found. When Croisilles reached Honfleur he embarked with a light heart, his money and his madrigal in his pocket, and, as soon as the boat landed at Havre he hastened to the paternal abode.

He found the shop closed; he knocked several times, not without astonishment and growing fear, for it was not a fête day; no one answered his knock. He called his father's name, but in vain. He went to a neighbor to inquire what had happened; instead of replying the neighbor turned aside as though he did not care to recognize him. Croisilles repeated his questions; he learned that his father, having been embarrassed for sometime, had finally failed and had fled to America, abandoning to his creditors all that he possessed. Before fully realizing his misfortune, Croisilles was first struck with the thought that he would never see his father again. It seemed impossible that he had been thus suddenly abandoned; he tried to force his way into the shop, but he was warned that the official seal had been placed on the door; he sat down on the step and gave way to his grief, weeping hot tears, deaf to the consolation offered by those

around him, calling again and again upon his father, although he knew he was far away; at last he arose, ashamed to see a crowd gathering around him, and, in deep despair, he made his way toward the port.

Standing on the pier he cast about him the wild look of a man who does not know where he is going or what will become of him. He felt that he was lost, that he was penniless, having no asylum to which he could flee, no means of support, and, it is needless to say, no friends left. Alone, wandering over the pier, he was tempted to throw himself into the sea. At the very moment he was yielding to that rash impulse, there advanced toward him from the other side of the pier, an old servant named Jean who had served his father many years.

"Ah! my poor Jean," he cried, "you know what has occurred during my absence. Is it possible that my father has gone away without a word for me?"

"He has gone," said Jean, "but not without bidding you adieu."

At the same time, he drew from his pocket a letter which he handed to his young master. Croisilles recognized his father's writing, and, before opening the letter, he kissed it with transports of joy; but the letter contained nothing but a few words. Instead of feeling his grief assuaged, the young man found his fears

confirmed. Honest up to that time, ruined by a misfortune which he could not foresee (the failure of an associate) the old goldsmith had left his son nothing but some few words of consolation and no hope, except that last hope which is born of despair.

"Jean, my friend," said Croisilles after reading the letter, "you have taken care of me when a child, and you are certainly the only friend I have left; that is fortunate for me but it may be embarrassing for you, for as sure as my father sailed from this spot, I am going to throw myself into the sea, not at this moment, in your presence, but some day or other, for I am lost."

"What is that you are going to do," inquired Jean, pretending that he did not understand but at the same time clutching Croisilles by the coat; "what is my dear master thinking of? Your father made a mistake, he was expecting money which never came, and that is no little matter. Could he remain here? I have for thirty years seen him accumulating a fortune; I have seen him working and planning while the money was coming in little by little. He was an honest man and skilfull, and he has been cruelly wronged. During the last days I was at his side, and I saw the money going out as fast as it came in. Your father paid in one day all he could and, when his strong box was empty, he said to me, pointing to the bottom

where there remained but six francs: 'There were one hundred thousand francs in that box this morning!' There is nothing dishonorable about such a failure!"

"I do not doubt my father's probity," replied Croisilles, "any more than I do his affection for me. But I wish I could have embraced him for I do not know what is to become of me. I was not made for a life of misery and I have not sufficient skill to make my own fortune. And even if I had, my father has gone away. If it took him thirty years to enrich himself how long would it take me to repair his misfortune? Many more. And will he be alive then? Probably not; he will die far away and I shall never see him again; I can only rejoin him by dying myself."

Torn with grief as he was, Croisilles did not forget his religion. Although his despair led him to desire death his religion bade him pause. After a few words with Jean, he gave the old servant his arm and together they walked back to the town. When they had entered its streets and the sea was left some distance in the rear Jean continued:

"But, monsieur, it seems to me that a man of fortune has the right to live and that misfortune proves nothing. Since you father, God be praised, did not kill himself, why should you think of dying? Since no dishonor at-

taches to you, as everyone knows, what would be thought of you if you should take such a rash step? That you were so weak that you could not endure poverty. You would prove yourself neither a brave man nor a christian; for, in truth, what is it that frightens you? There are people who are born poor and who have neither father nor mother. I know that all are not alike, but I know that with God all things are possible. Your father was not born rich and it is perhaps that thought that now consoles him. If you had been here during the last month you would have imbibed more courage. Yes, anyone may be ruined, no one is entirely free from the danger of bankruptcy; but I make so bold as to say that your father was a man in spite of the fact that he went away rather suddenly. But what could you expect? Vessels do not sail for America every-day. I accompanied him to the dock, and you should have seen how sad he was! How he charged me to take care of you and give you news of him! You must put away all idea of throwing yourself into the sea. Everyone has his time of trial here below and I was a soldier before I became a servant. I have suffered many hardships, but I was young; I was your age then and it seemed to me that Providence could not say its last word to a man of twenty-five. Why would you prevent the good God

from repairing the evil you have suffered? Be patient and all will come out right. If you will permit me to offer you advice I would say, wait two or three years and all will be well. There are always ways of getting on in this world. Why should you stake everything on one unlucky turn of the cards?"

While Jean was thus striving to persuade his master, Croisilles walked along in silence, and, after the manner of those who suffer, he looked about him on one side and the other as though seeking for something that would serve to attach him to life. As luck would have it, Mademoiselle Godeau, the daughter of the farmer-general passed by with her governess. Her home was not far distant, Croisilles saw her enter there. That meeting produced on him more effect than all the reasoning in the world. I have already said that he was something of a fool, and that he almost always yielded to his first impulse. Without a moment's hesitation, without a word of explanation, he dropped the old servant's arm and turned aside to knock at M. Godeau's door.

II

When one undertakes in the present day to represent what was formerly known as a financier, one imagines an enormous paunch, short

legs, an immense perruque, a large face with triple chin; and there is reason for thus picturing such a personage. Everyone knows what abuses grew out of the royal farming system, and it would seem that there must be a natural law which makes fatter than other men those who fatten not only on their own idleness but on the toil of others. Among financiers, M. Godeau was as classic as could be found anywhere, that is to say very fat; just at this time he had the gout, a complaint that was as much in vogue then as is the headache to-day. Stretched out in a long chair, his eyes half closed, he was nursing his swollen feet. The glass panels which surrounded him, majestically repeated the various parts of his enormous person; bags filled with gold covered the table; all about him costly furnishings, gilded canopies, doors, locks, the chimney-piece, the ceilings, everything gilded, even his coat; I do not know but that his brain was also gilded. He was estimating the returns on a little affair which he was confident would bring in some thousands of louis; he was smiling over the prospect when Croisilles was announced and entered the room with a humble but resolute air, and a general appearance of disorder such as one might expect to find in a man who thinks seriously of drowning himself. Godeau was just a little surprised at this unexpected visit; he supposed

his daughter had made some purchases; he was confirmed in that belief when he saw his daughter appear at almost the same moment. He made a sign to Croisilles, not to be seated, but to speak. The daughter stationed herself on a sofa and Croisilles, standing before M. Godeau, began to unburden himself something after this manner :

"Monsieur, my father has just failed in business. The bankruptcy of a business associate forced him to suspend payment, and unable to witness his own shame, he has fled to America after turning over to his creditors his last sou. I was out of the city when this took place; I have just returned and learned of this sad event but two hours ago. I am left absolutely without resources and I have decided to die. Upon leaving this house I shall probably drown myself. I would have done so before this if chance had not ordered that I should meet Mademoiselle, your daughter, in the street. I love her, monsieur, with all my heart; for two years I have loved her and I have been silent up to this moment on account of the respect I feel for her; but to-day, in declaring my love I discharge a sacred duty and I believe I would offend God if, before putting an end to my life, I did not come to you and ask your permission to marry Mademoiselle Julie. I have not the least hope that you will grant my request, but

I am, nevertheless, impelled to make it for I am a good christian, monsieur, and when a good christian reaches a point where life is no longer possible, he ought at least, by way of extenuating his crime, exhaust every means of delaying the fatal moment."

At the first words of this discourse M. Godeau supposed that he was to be asked to make a loan and he had prudently thrown his handkerchief over his money-bags, preparing in advance to give a polite refusal, for he had always thought well of Croisilles' father. But when he heard the youth through, and realized the nature of his request, he was satisfied that the poor boy had become a complete fool. At first he thought of ringing for a servant and having him put out of the house, but when he observed the firmness of the youth and the look of sincerity on his face, he could not help pitying the victim of such a mild form of dementia. He contented himself with ordering his daughter to retire so that she might not hear any more such disagreeable revelations.

While Croisilles was speaking Mademoiselle Godeau had become as red as a peach in the month of August. In obedience to her father's order she retired. The young man made a profound bow which she did not appear to notice. Alone with Croisilles, M. Godeau eyed him from head to foot, stood up, then fell back on

his cushions, and forced himself to assume a paternal air.

"My boy," said he, "I sincerely hope that you are not joking with me, but that you have really lost your senses. Not only do I forgive your termerity but I promise not to punish you for it. I am sorry your poor devil of a father has become bankrupt and that he has decamped—it is all very sad, and I can readily understand how it has turned your head. I wish to do something for you; take a chair and be seated."

"It is useless, monsieur," replied Croisilles; "the moment you refuse me I shall take final leave of you. I wish you every kind of success and prosperity."

"And where are you going?"

"To write to my father and bid him adieu."

"What the devil! Why anyone might swear you were telling the truth. You intend to drown yourself; what the devil do I care!"

"Yes, monsieur, at least I think so, if courage does not fail me."

"A fine thing to do! Fie! Out upon you! Sit down, I tell you, and listen to me."

M. Godeau had just made a sensible reflection to the effect that it was never agreeable to have it said that any man, whoever he might be, had gone out and drowned himself immediately upon quitting us. He again eyed the young man before him, took out his snuff-box,

cast an anxious look at his frilled shirt-front, and continued:

"You are a stupid fellow, a fool, a child, that is clear; you do not know what you are talking about. You are ruined—that is your own affair. But, my dear friend, that is not sufficient to excuse such a deed; you must reflect before taking such a step. If you come to ask me for—good advice, say, why that is all right! Let it pass; but what is it you want? You are in love with my daughter?"

"Yes, monsieur, and I repeat that I am very far from supposing that you will consent to give her to me as my wife; but as that is the only thing on earth that could save me from death, if you believe in God, as I suppose you do, you will understand why I have come to you."

"Whether I believe in God or not does not concern you and I will not permit you to question me in that way; answer my questions, where have you seen my daughter?"

"In my father's shop and in this house when I delivered the jewels for Mademoiselle Julie."

"Who told you her name was Julie? God pardon me but you seem to have forgotten where you are! But whether her name is Julie or Javotte, do you know what he must have who would aspire to the hand of the daughter of a farmer-general?"

"No, I am sure I do not, unless it be wealth equal to hers."

"He must have something else, my fine fellow, he must have a name."

"Very well! my name is Croisilles."

"Your name is Croisilles, you wretch! And is Croisilles a name?"

"In faith, monsieur, 'pon my soul and conscience it is as good a name as Godeau."

"You are impertinent and you shall answer for it."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, do not be angry, I have not the slightest inclination to offend you. If you see anything in what I have said which wounds you and if you wish to punish me, you have only to become angry; upon leaving this house I shall drown myself."

Although M. Godeau had promised himself that he would send Croisilles away as gently as possible, in order to avoid all danger of scandal, his prudence was not equal to the impatience inspired by offended pride; the interview to which he was trying to resign himself seemed monstrous in itself; I leave you to imagine what he thought while delivering himself of the following words:

"Listen," said he, almost beside himself and resolved to put an end to the matter at any price, "you are not such a fool that you can not understand a word of common sense. Are

you rich? No. Are you noble? Still less. What frenzy has induced you to come to me? You have come here to pester me, you think you can make something by a bold stroke; you know very well that it is useless; you hope to make me responsible for your death? Can you justly complain of anything I have done? Do I owe your father a sou? Is it my fault you are where you are? Very well, go drown yourself and leave me in peace."

"That is just what I am going to do; I am your very humble servant."

"One moment! It shall not be said that you applied to me for assistance in vain. Here, my boy, are four louis; go and get a good dinner and let me hear no more of you."

"Many thanks, but I am not hungry and have no use for your money!"

Croisilles left the room, and the financier, having eased his conscience by the offer he had just made, settled comfortably in his cushioned chair and resumed his meditations.

Mademoiselle Godeau, during all this time had not been so far away as one might suppose; she had, it is true, left the room in obedience to her father's command, but instead of retiring to her own room, she stood near the door and listened. If Croisilles' extravagant course had astonished her, it had not at least offended her, for love, since the beginning of time, has

never passed for offense ; on the other hand, as there could be no doubt about the young man's despair, Mademoiselle Godeau experienced the two sentiments which are most dangerous for women, pity and curiosity. When she saw that the interview was at an end and that Croisilles was about to go, she hastily crossed the room where she had been stationed, not caring to be caught in the act of spying ; then she suddenly stopped and retraced her steps. The thought that Croisilles was really going to kill himself troubled her heart. Without reflecting on her course she advanced to meet him ; the room was quite large and the two young people slowly approached each other. Croisilles was as pale as death and Mademoiselle Godeau sought in vain for some word which should express what she felt. While passing near him she allowed a bunch of violets to drop from her hand. He at once stooped, picked up the flowers and offered them to her ; but instead of accepting them she continued on her way without a word and entered her father's room. Croisilles placed the flowers on his breast and left the house with throbbing heart, not knowing what to make of that adventure.

III

He had hardly reached the street before he saw the faithful Jean running toward him, his face beaming with joy.

"What has happened?" he asked; "have you some news for me?"

"Monsieur," replied Jean, "I have to inform you that the seals have been removed and that you can return to your own house. All of your father's debts having been paid, you are now the owner of the house. It is true that they have carried off all the money and valuables, even the furniture, but the house remains, and you have not lost everything. I have been looking for you everywhere for an hour and did not know what had become of you, and I hope, my dear master, you will be wise and not do anything rash."

"What would you advise me to do?"

"Sell your house, monsieur, for that is your fortune. It is worth thirty thousand francs. With that sum you need not die of starvation, and what is to prevent you from buying some goods and engaging in some business which I am sure will prosper?"

"We shall see," replied Croisilles continuing on his way down the street. He was loath to return to his father's house, and when he arrived, the sight that met his eyes left him with-

out the courage to enter. The shop was in disorder, the rooms deserted, his father's sleeping room empty, everywhere nakedness and misery. There was not even a chair left; all the drawers had been rifled, the counter broken, the strong box carried away; nothing had escaped the greedy eyes of creditors and justice, who, after having pillaged the house, took their departure, leaving the doors open as though to give evidence to the passers-by of the thoroughness of their work.

"Behold," cried Croisilles, "behold all that remains of thirty years of toil and honest effort, because at a certain time, a particular hour, there was not quite enough to honor a signature imprudently pledged!"

While the young man was wandering sadly through the house, a prey to bitter reflections, Jean appeared to be much embarrassed. He supposed his master had no money, that he had not even dined. He was casting about for some pretext to question him, and, if necessary, offer him part of his savings. After torturing his mind in a vain effort to decide on some expedient, he could think of nothing better than to approach Croisilles and tenderly inquire:

"Does monsieur like partridges with cabbage?"

The poor fellow pronounced these words with

an accent at once so comical and so pathetic, that Croisilles, in spite of his sorrow, could not help laughing.

"And why do you ask, Jean?"

"Monsieur," replied Jean, "I ask because my wife is going to cook some for dinner and if—"

Up to the present moment Croisilles had entirely forgotten the sum of money he had collected for his father in Paris; Jean's proposition reminded him that his pockets were full of gold.

"I thank you with all my heart," said he to the old man, "and I accept with pleasure; but if you are disturbed about the state of my finances let me assure you that I have more than enough to buy a good supper this evening which you shall share with me."

With these words he produced four well filled purses which contained fifty louis each.

"Although this money does not belong to me," he added, "I can use it for two or three days. Can you tell me how to address it so that it will reach my father?"

"Monsieur," Jean hastened to reply, "your father instructed me to tell you that that money belongs to you, and I have not mentioned the matter before because I did not know what success you had met with in Paris. Your father will lack nothing in this life; he will be taken care of by one of his correspondents in Amer-

ica ; moreover, he took away with him enough to satisfy his needs, knowing that there was more than enough here to meet his liabilities, and whatever is left over and above that belongs to you ; I was expressly charged to tell you this. This gold is as honestly yours as the house in which we stand. I can even recall your father's words on this subject : 'Tell my son to forgive me for leaving him ; tell him not to forget me, but to use all that is left after my debts are paid as though it were my fortune bequeathed to him.' Those, monsieur, were his own words, so put that in your pocket, and since you think well of my dinner, let us go and make sure of it."

The joy and sincerity which shone in Jean's eyes left Croisilles no room for doubt. His father's words had affected him so deeply that he could not restrain his tears ; on the other hand, four thousand francs were not such a bagatelle under the circumstances. And then the house could not be counted upon as available assets for it must be sold and that was sometimes a long and difficult process. All that could not fail to bring about a considerable change in the young man's condition ; all thoughts of self destruction were lost in a feeling of gratitude and he was at the same time conscious of increased sadness although less desolate. After having closed the shutters and

locked the door, he left the spot with Jean and, while crossing the city once more, he could not help thinking how strange it is that our affections enable us to experience unexpected joy in the feeblest gleam of hope. With that thought in his mind he sat down to dinner with his old servant, who did all he could to cheer his master during the humble meal.

The heedless have one happy defect; they are easily grieved, and at the same time easily consoled. It would be a mistake to consider them either insensible or egotistic; their sensations are perhaps more intense than those of others and they are quite capable of blowing their brains out in a moment of despair; but when that moment has passed, if they still live, they feel the necessity of eating and drinking as usual. Joy and sorrow do not glide over them; they pass through their hearts like a flash; sincere and passionate natures which know suffering but which know no falsehood, natures through which one can easily see; not fragile and empty like blown glass, but full and transparent like rock crystal.

After having clinked glasses with Jean, Croisilles, instead of drowning himself, went to the theatre. There he drew from his bosom Mademoiselle Godeau's bouquet, and breathing its perfume he began to meditate on his morning's adventure. When he had reflected some

time he decided that the young lady, in allowing that bouquet to slip from her grasp and refusing to take it back, wished to give him a mark of interest; otherwise her refusal and silence could have been nothing but an evidence of contempt, and that was out of the question. Croisilles therefore decided that Mademoiselle Godeau's heart was less hard than her father's and he had no difficulty in satisfying himself, that while she was crossing the room, her face had expressed an emotion that was as sincere as it seemed involuntary. But was that sentiment love or only pity, or least of all, a natural impulse of humanity? Was Mademoiselle Godeau afraid that he was going to die, or was she merely unwilling to be the cause of the death of any man, whoever he might be? Although faded and crumpled, the bouquet still retained an odor so delicious and an appearance so pleasing that while breathing its perfume and looking at it Croisilles could not repress a feeling of exultation. It was a garland of roses surrounding a bunch of violets. How many sentiments and mysteries a Turk would have divined in interpreting their language! But in the present instance the Turk had nothing to do with it. Flowers which fall from the bosom of a pretty woman in Europe as well as in the Orient, are never mute. If they but recount what they have seen, if they but say that they

have rested on a certain beautiful bosom, that is enough for the most ardent lover. Perfumes resemble love, and there are those who think that love is itself a sort of perfume, and it is true that the flower which exhales it is the most beautiful in all creation.

While Croisilles was dreaming thus, paying little attention to the comedy which was being represented on the stage, Mademoiselle Godeau herself took her seat in a box directly in front of him. The idea did not occur to him that if she should see him there she might think it strange after what had taken place. On the contrary, he made every effort to attract her attention; but in vain. A dancer had come from Paris to take part in the performance of Merope, and the crowd was so thick he could not stir. So he tried to content himself with fixing his eyes on her. He observed that she seemed preoccupied and dull and that she had to make an effort to speak to those about her. Her box was surrounded, as may easily be imagined, by all the ambitious coxcombs of which the town could boast; each one passed in turn behind the box in which she sat; as for entering the box that was out of the question for her father's enormous bulk closed the passage. Croisilles also observed that she did not use her glasses and that she was not paying any attention to the play. Her elbow resting

on the railing, her chin in her hand, she resembled, with her general air of distraction, a Venus disguised as a marchioness; the flowing folds of her dress, her coiffure, her rouge, under which one suspected her pallor, all the pomp and circumstance of her toilet only served to call attention to her immobility. Never had Croisilles seen her so beautiful. During the entr'acte he effected his escape from the imprisoning crowd and hastened to the Godeau box to look in at the little square window opening to the passage-way. Strange to say, no sooner had he reached it than Mademoiselle Godeau, who had not stirred during the entire evening, turned her head. She trembled slightly upon seeing him, but gave him only a glance; then she resumed her listless attitude. Whether that glance expressed surprise, anxiety, pleasure or love; whether it meant, "What! you are not dead!" or, "God be praised! you are alive!" I shall not undertake to decide; but it is certain that when Croisilles saw that glance he swore that he would die or he would win her love.

IV

Of all the obstacles in the path of love one of the greatest is undoubtedly what is called false modesty, which is, in fact, not at all false.

Croisilles had none of the feelings due to pride and timidity; he was not the kind of man to walk around a woman he loved as a cat walks around the caged bird. When he gave up the idea of drowning himself his only thought was to apprise his dear Julie that he had decided to live for her alone; but how could he make this known to her? If he should again present himself at the Godeau mansion he had no doubt but that M. Godeau would have him put out of the house. Julie never went out except with her maid when she chanced to go on foot; it was, therefore, useless to think of following her. To pass the night under the windows of his mistress is a folly dear to the hearts of youthful lovers, but in the present case still more useless. I have already said that Croisilles was very religious; therefore it did not occur to him to try to meet his love at church. He decided that the best thing he could do would be to write to her. His letter, which had neither rhyme nor reason, was conceived in something like the following terms:

“Mademoiselle:—

“Tell me truly, I beg of you, how much of a fortune one must have before he can aspire to your hand. I am asking you a strange question, but I love you so desperately that I must ask it, and you are the only one in the world to whom I could address it. It seemed to me, last evening at the theatre, that you favored me with a glance. I wished to die; would to God I had if that glance was not for me!

Tell me, is chance so cruel as to deceive a man in this way? I presumed to believe that you encouraged me to live. You are rich and beautiful, I know it; your father is vain and avaricious, and you have a right to be proud; but I love you, and all the rest is but a dream. Fix on me your beautiful eyes, and think what such love as mine is capable of; even now a strange feeling of joy possesses me, although I realize that this letter may arouse your anger; but also reflect, mademoiselle, that you are to some extent responsible for my folly. Why did you drop that bouquet? Put yourself, if you please, in my place; I dare to believe that you love me, and I dare to ask you to tell me so. Pardon me, I beg of you. I would give my blood to know that I am not offending you, and to see you listening to this avowal with that angelic smile which is yours alone. Whatever you do, your image remains in my heart; you can not efface it except by tearing out that heart on which it has been traced. As long as your glance shall live in my memory, as long as these flowers retain some vestige of their primeval fragrance, as long as words shall struggle to express love, I shall cherish some hope."

When he had sealed this letter, Croisilles made his way to the Godeau mansion and walked up and down before the house, hoping to encounter a servant. Chance which always favors lovers in hiding, when it can do so without compromising itself, brought it about that Mademoiselle Julie's maid should decide to purchase a bonnet that very day. She was on her way to the milliner's shop when Croisilles approached her, slipped a louis into her hand and begged her to deliver his letter. The bargain was soon concluded; the servant took the

money to pay for the bonnet and agreed to deliver the letter by way of expressing her gratitude. Croisilles, delighted with his good fortune, returned home and sat down before the door to wait for a reply

Before speaking of that reply, a word about Mademoiselle Godeau. She was not altogether free from her father's vanity, but her natural good disposition remedied whatever defects she may have inherited from him. She was, in the full force of the term, what is known as a spoiled child. She was habitually quiet, talking but little, and she had never been seen holding a needle; she passed entire days at her toilet and the evenings on a sofa, apparently taking no interest in the conversation around her. In her dress she was a terrible coquette, and it was easy to see that her own face received more of her attention than anything else in the world. A wrinkle in her collar, a spot of ink on her finger, would make her unhappy; and then when her dress pleased her, no one could describe the parting glance she bestowed on her mirror before leaving her room. She seemed to exhibit neither taste nor aversion for that which ordinarily appeals to young ladies; she was always ready to go to a ball, or she would give up going without disappointment, sometimes without motive; the theatre was a bore and she was accustomed to sleep through

a performance. When her father, who adored her, proposed to make her whatever present she might choose, it took her an hour to make up her mind, being unable to think of anything she really desired. When M. Godeau held a reception or gave a dinner, Julie never appeared in the salon, but passed the evening in her room, walking up and down in full toilet, her fan in her hand. If anyone happened to pay her a compliment, she would turn her head away, and if any attempt was made to press a suit, she would reply with a glance so brilliant and at the same time so serious that it disconcerted the boldest. She was never known to laugh at a bonmot; no operatic air or tragical tirade had ever moved her; never, in short, had her heart given a sign of life and seeing her pass by in all the radiance of her nonchalant beauty one might have taken her for a charming somnambulist floating through the world in a dream.

It is hard to account for so much indifference and so much coquetry. Some said she cared for nothing; others that she cared for nothing but herself. A single word, however, will explain her character: she was waiting. Since the age of fourteen she had been accustomed to hear everyone say that there was none other so charming as she; she believed it and that is why she took such pains with her toilet; she

would have looked upon any failure to respect her person as sacrilege. She walked about, so to speak, in her beauty as a child in its holiday dress; but she was far from believing that her beauty should be wasted; under her apparent indifference, she concealed an inflexible will, a will that was all the stronger for being disguised. The coquetry of ordinary women which expresses itself in glances, in mincing manners and smiles, seemed to her so much childish skirmishing, vain, almost contemptible. She felt that she possessed a treasure and she scorned to risk it little by little in a game of chance: she must have an adversary worthy of her; but being so accustomed to having every desire anticipated, she did not set out in search of that adversary; one might even say that she was astonished that he should make her wait. During the four or five years she had been going about in the world displaying her dresses, her furbelows and her beautiful shoulders, it seemed inconceivable to her that she had not inspired the *grande passion* in some breast. If she had expressed the sentiment at the bottom of her heart to those who paid her compliments she would have said: "Very well, if it is true that I am so beautiful, why do you not blow out your brains for me?" A reply that many women might make, and one that is at

the bottom of many a feminine heart and which sometimes rises to the lips.

What is there in all the world more aggravating for a beautiful woman than to be young, beautiful and rich, to survey herself in the glass, to see herself arrayed in a manner that can not fail to please, ready to be loved, and then to be obliged to say to herself: "I am admired, I am praised, everyone says I am charming, and no one loves me. My dress is of the best, my lace is superb, my coiffure is irreproachable, my face the most beautiful in the world, my form perfect, my foot well clad, and all that fits me for nothing except to yawn in a corner of the salon! If a young man speaks to me, he treats me as a child; if he seeks me in marriage it is for my dowry; if some one presses my hand during the dance, it is some fop from the provinces; wherever I appear I excite murmurs of admiration, but no one draws me aside and whispers in my ear a word that makes my heart beat. I understand the impertinent fellows who praise me loudly at a distance of two paces and not a single modest and sincere glance meets mine. I have an ardent soul, full of life and I am nothing but a pretty baby that is paraded up and down for the delectation of the applauding crowd; a baby, dressed in the morning and undressed at night

in order to be ready for a repetition of the farce on the morrow."

That is what Mademoiselle Godeau had many times confessed to herself, and there were times when such thoughts filled her with such a feeling of weariness that she would sit silent and motionless for an entire day. When Croisilles wrote to her she was in just such a mood. She had just taken her chocolate and was dreaming lazily in her easychair when her maid entered and with an air of mystery handed her a letter. She looked at the address and failing to recognize the handwriting, resumed her interrupted dreams. The maid was forced to explain the circumstances under which the letter had been received, which she did with some trepidation; in doubt as to how her mistress would look upon such a proceeding. Mademoiselle Godeau listened without stirring, then opened the letter and cast her eye over its contents; she immediately asked for pen and ink and carelessly penned the following reply:

"Ah! no, monsieur, I am not proud. If you have merely three hundred thousand francs, I will cheerfully consent to marry you."

Such was the reply the maid carried at once to Croisilles, who gave her another louis for her trouble.

V

"A hundred thousand ecus," as the proverb goes, "is not found in the hoof of an ass," and if Croisilles had been distrustful, he might have suspected, in reading that letter, that Made-moiselle Godeau was either a fool or she was trifling with him. However, he thought of nothing of the kind; he could see nothing in it but the fact that Julie loved him and that he must have three hundred thousand francs and that he must set about procuring that sum at once.

He possessed two hundred louis in cash, and the house, as I have said, was worth perhaps thirty thousand francs more. What should he do? How could he at once transform those thirty-four thousand francs into three hundred thousand? The first idea that occurred to his mind was to find some manner of playing his entire fortune at heads-or-tails; but in order to do that he must first sell his house. He at once prepared a sign announcing that the house was for sale, which he fastened to the front door of the shop; then, abandoning himself to golden dreams of the future, he waited for a purchaser.

A week passed, then another; no buyer presented himself. Croisilles passed the time in mournful condolence with Jean; he was almost ready to despair when a Jewish broker knocked at the door.

"This house is for sale, monsieur? Are you the owner?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And how much is it worth?"

"Thirty thousand francs, I believe; at least I have heard my father say so."

The Jew examined all the rooms, ascended to the top floor and descended into the cellar, knocked on the walls, counted the steps in the stairway, turned all the doors on their hinges and the keys in their locks, opened and closed the windows; then after making a careful examination of the entire building, without saying a word or making a single proposition, he bowed to Croisilles and retired.

Croisilles who had followed him about for an hour with throbbing heart, was not a little disappointed, as may readily be imagined, at this silent withdrawal. He supposed that the Jew wanted time to reflect and that he would soon return. He waited eight days, not daring to leave the house for fear of missing his visitor, and seated at the window he watched for him night and day. But in vain; the Jew did not return. Jean, faithful to his sad rôle of comforter, urged his master not to sell the house in such a hasty manner and for such a hazardous purpose. Dying of impatience, of weariness and of love, Croisilles, one fine morning, took his two hundred louis and went out, determined

to try his fortune with that sum since he could get no more.

Gambling houses were not public institutions in those days, and they had not yet invented that refinement of civilization which permits the first comer to ruin himself whenever he pleases, whenever the idea occurs to him. No sooner had Croisilles reached the street than he stopped, not knowing where to go to risk his money. He looked at the houses along the street, eyeing them one after the other, trying to find something suspicious about them that would guide him in his search. A young man of good appearance, and wearing a magnificent coat, passed by him. Judging from his dress and manner, Croisilles decided that he must be a young man of good family and politely stepped up to him.

"Monsieur," said he, "I beg your pardon for the liberty I am taking. I have two hundred louis in my pocket and I am very anxious to either lose them or win more. Can you direct me to some respectable place where I can be accommodated?"

At this strange request the young man burst out laughing.

"In faith, monsieur," he replied, "if you are looking for such a place you have only to follow me for I am on my way to one at this very moment."

Croisilles followed him and together they entered a house of respectable appearance where they were cordially received by an old man who seemed to be of a most sociable disposition. Several young men were already seated about a table covered with green cloth; Croisilles modestly took his place at the table, and in less than an hour had lost his two hundred louis.

He left the place as sad as a young lover who believes his love is requitted, can possibly be. He did not have enough left to buy a dinner, but that was not what troubled him.

"Now what shall I do," he asked himself, "to get some money? Whom can I ask to loan me a hundred louis on that house I can not sell?"

While in that state of embarrassment he met his Jewish broker. He did not hesitate to address him and, foolish youth that he was, he did not hesitate to tell him how he was situated. The Jew did not care to buy the house; he had only slipped in to see it out of curiosity, or rather from a sense of duty, just as a dog in passing a kitchen the door of which stands open, walks in to see what there is to steal; but he saw that Croisilles was so desperate, so sad, so stripped of all resources, that he could not resist the temptation to put himself to some little trouble and buy the house.

He offered him about one-fourth as much as the house was worth. Croisilles threw his arms around his neck, called him his friend and savior, blindly signed a contract that was enough to make one's hair stand on end, and, on the morrow, the happy possessor of four hundred new louis, he again directed his steps toward the gambling house where he had been so politely and so cheerfully ruined the day before.

On the way he passed near the harbor. A vessel was about to leave port; the breeze was blowing gently, the sea was calm. On every side, merchants, sailors, officers in uniform, were going and coming. Porters were carrying hither and thither enormous bales of merchandise. Passengers were bidding their friends adieu, light crafts were sailing here and there about the harbor; on every face one could read fear, impatience or hope; and, in the midst of the agitation which surrounded it, the majestic ship proudly floated, her enormous sails swelling in the breeze.

"What a fine thing it is," thought Croisilles, "to risk thus whatever one may possess, and to go to seek in distant seas perilous fortune! What joy to watch that vessel as it leaves the harbor freighted with so much wealth, the fortunes of so many families! What rapture to see it return, bringing back twice as much as was confided to it, entering port prouder and

richer than when it set sail! Why am I not one of these merchants! Why should I not stake my four hundred louis on such a venture! What green cloth is there equal to that immense sea on which to tempt fortune! Why should I not buy some bales of linens and silks? What is there to hinder since I have the money? Why should the captain refuse to accept my merchandise? And who knows, instead of losing this poor fortune in a gambling house, I may double it and triple it by an honest investment? If Julie truly loves me she will wait a few years and she will be faithful until I am able to marry her. Commerce sometimes brings in larger returns than one would think; there are many instances of fortunes rapidly accumulated in a surprisingly short space of time on these restless waves; why should Providence not bless a venture made with such a praiseworthy motive, so deserving of its protection? Among these merchants who send ships to the ends of the world, there are many who started with less than I have. They have prospered with God's blessing; why should I not prosper? It seems to me that a good wind blows upon those sails and that ship inspires confidence. Come, the die is cast, I am going to speak to that captain who has an honest face; I shall then write to Julie, and I wish to become a successful merchant."

The greatest danger that people who are a little foolish run is that they may at any moment become completely so. The poor boy, without further reflection took steps to carry out his whim. To find goods to buy when one has money and knows nothing about their value, is the easiest thing in the world. The captain, in order to oblige Croisilles, directed him to one of his friends who sold him as much linen and silk as he could pay for; the goods were promptly conveyed on board. Croisilles, delighted with his bargain and buoyed up with hope, wrote his name in large letters on the bales he had just purchased. He watched the ship weigh anchor with inexpressible delight; slowly the ship moved from the dock and sailed down the harbor.

VI

I need not tell you that in this venture Croisilles had risked everything. His house had been sold, he had nothing left but the clothes on his back; no place to sleep, not a sou in his pocket. Jean had no idea his master was reduced to such extremities; Croisilles was not too proud but too careless to say anything to him about it; he decided to sleep under the stars, and, as for food, he made the following

calculation: he estimated that it would take the vessel which bore his fortune six months to return to Havre; he determined to sell, not without regret, a gold watch his father had given him; he received for it thirty-six francs. He could thus live six months at the rate of four sous a day. He had no fears but that that was enough, and, the present provided for, he wrote to Mademoiselle Godeau to inform her what he had done; he was careful not to speak of his present condition; on the contrary he told her that he had made an important investment the results of which would speedily prove immensely profitable; he explained how the "Fleurette," a sailing vessel of one hundred and fifty tons burthen, was carrying across the Baltic his linens and silks; he begged her to be faithful for one year and on his part he would swear eternal love for her.

When Mademoiselle Godeau received that letter she was seated before her fire and held in her hand instead of a screen, one of those bulletins such as are printed in ports of entry containing a list of arrivals and departures of vessels and a record of disasters. She had never thought of such a thing, as may readily be imagined, as taking any interest in the movements of sailing vessels and she had never even glanced at one of those bulletins. Croisille's letter led her to examine the one she

held in her hand ; the first word which caught her eye was that name "Fleurette;" the ship had been wrecked off the coast of France the very night of its departure. The crew had barely escaped with their lives, while all the cargo was lost.

When she had read that piece of news, Made-moiselle Godeau remembered that Croisilles had confessed his poverty to her father; she felt as much sorrow and disappointment as though it was a matter of a million; the horrors of a tempest, the fury of the winds, the shrieks of the drowning, the ruin of a man who loved her suddenly pictured itself before her like a scene in a play; the bulletin and the letter fell from her hands; she arose from her seat in great distress, and her bosom heaving, her eyes filled with tears, she began to walk up and down the room, resolved to act but in doubt what to do.

We must do love the justice to admit that the stronger the motives which combat it, the more unreasonable, the more unanswerable the arguments against it, in a word the less there is of commonsense in it, the more irritated the passion becomes and the more one loves; there is no more beautiful thing under heaven than that unreasonableness of the heart; we would not be worth much without it. After walking up and down the room for some time

without forgetting either her fan or the passing glance in the mirror, Julie dropped back into her easychair. Whoever could have seen her at that moment would have beheld a beautiful sight; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were on fire; she heaved a deep sigh and murmured with a delicious mingling of joy and sorrow:

"Poor boy! He has ruined himself for me!"

Independent of the fortune she would inherit from her father, Mademoiselle Godeau had in her own right the fortune left her by her mother. She had never given it a thought before; at that moment, for the first time in her life, she recalled the fact that she possessed the sum of five hundred thousand francs. That thought made her smile; a bold project, but one distinctly feminine, almost as foolish as those of Croisilles himself, occurred to her mind; she revolved it in her head for some time, then decided to put it into execution.

She began by inquiring if he had some relative or friend; the maid was pressed into service to find out. After some search there was found on the fourth floor of an old house, an aunt, an almost helpless invalid who never stirred from her chair and who had not left her room for four years. That poor woman, burdened with years, seemed to have been left in the world to serve as a sample of human misery. Blind, gouty, almost deaf, she lived all alone

in a garret ; but a cheerfulness that was stronger than sickness and misfortune, had sustained her for twenty-four years and made her still cling to life ; her neighbors never passed her door without entering and the quaint old tunes she was accustomed to hum delighted all the girls in the neighborhood. She had a small income which sufficed to support her ; she would pass the entire day at her knitting ; as for the rest, she did not know what had taken place since the death of Louis XIV.

This was this respectable old lady that Julie decided to visit. She put on all her finery for the occasion, feathers, laces, ribbons, diamonds, nothing was spared : she wished to seduce the aunt ; but her natural beauty was the real motive of this caprice. She mounted the dark and rickety stairway leading to the old lady's garret, and, bowing in the most gracious manner, she addressed her in about the following terms :

"Madam, you have a nephew by the name of Croisilles who loves me and has asked for my hand ; I also love him and wish to marry him ; but my father, M. Godeau, farmer-general, refuses his consent because your nephew is not rich. Above all things I wish to avoid scandal and I am unwilling to cause anyone needless sorrow ; I could not think of such a thing as disposing of my hand without my family's

consent. I have come to you to ask a favor which I hope you will grant ; I want you to go to my father yourself and propose our marriage. I have, I am happy to say, a little fortune which is at your service ; you may have, whenever you please, five hundred thousand francs, on deposit with the notary subject to your order ; you will say that that sum belongs to your nephew, and it does belong to him in fact ; it is not a present I make him but a debt I discharge for he has been ruined on my account and it is only right that I should make good his loss. My father will not consent very readily ; you must insist and you must have a little courage ; I will not fail to do my part. As no one in the world has any claims on that sum of which I speak, no one need ever know how it came into your hands. You are not rich, I am aware of that, and you may fear that such a dowry would astonish your friends ; but remember that my father does not know you, that you are rarely seen in the village, and therefore it will be easy for you to arrive from a long voyage. Such a step will doubtless cost you something ; you will be obliged to leave your chair and put yourself to some trouble but you will make two beings happy, madam, and if you have ever known love I hope you will not refuse me."

The good old lady, while listening to this

strange proposal, had been at first surprised and disturbed, then affected and charmed. The last word decided her..

"Yes, my child," she repeated over and over, "I know what that is, I know what that is!"

Speaking thus she made an effort to rise; her feeble limbs would hardly support her; Julie hastened to her side to assist her; almost before they knew it they were in each other's arms. The treaty was signed, a kiss sealed the compact.

When all the necessary instructions had been given the old lady took from her closet a venerable dress of silk which she had worn on her wedding day. That antique garment was not less than fifty years of age, but not a spot, not a speck of dust could be seen on it; Julie was full of admiration. A carriage was hired, the finest in all the town. The old lady began to compose an address to M. Godeau; Julie told her how she could best touch her father's heart and confessed to her that vanity was his failing.

"If you can think of some way of flattering his pride," she said, "the battle is half won."

The good old lady, absorbed in deep reflection, finished her toilet without a word, pressed the hand of her future niece, and entered the carriage. She soon reached the Godeau mansion; she stood up so straight as she

entered the door that she seemed ten years younger. Majestically she traversed the salon where Julie had dropped her bouquet, and when the door of the farmer-general's office opened before her, she said in a firm voice to the lackey who proceeded her :

"Announce the Baroness Dowager de Croisilles."

That word decided the happiness of the two lovers ; M. Godeau was dazzled. Although five hundred thousand francs seemed a small dowry, he was willing to let that pass in order to make a baroness of his daughter ; and who dares contest that title ? In my opinion it was well earned.

ADVENTURES OF A WHITE BLACKBIRD

I

How glorious and yet how painful it is to be an exception! I am not a bird of fabulous origin; on the contrary M. de Buffon has described and classified me. But alas! I am extremely rare and hard to find. Would to God I were unknown!

My father and mother were good honest people who lived in an old garden near Marais. Theirs was an exemplary household. While my mother, snugly concealed in a large bush, was patiently hatching, three times a year, her garnered eggs, my father, still very spruce and very petulant, in spite of his advanced age foraged here and there all day long, fetching her beautiful insects which he held daintily by the end of the tail so as not to disgust his wife; and, at eventide, when the weather was fine, he never failed to regale her with a flood of song that rejoiced all so fortunate as to hear its me-

ludicrous cadences. No quarrel, not the slightest misunderstanding ever troubled their peace.

Hardly had I come into the world when my father, for the first time in his life, gave evidence of ill-humor. While I was still in the doubtful gray of extreme youth, he pretended that I possessed neither the color nor the general characteristics of his numerous posterity.

"What a dirty child," he said, looking at me askance; "that fellow looks as though he had been playing in all the plaster beds and mud holes he could find to get so ugly and so bedraggled."

"But, my dear," replied my mother, rolled up like a ball in an old porringer which served as her nest, "that is what you should expect at his age. I warrant you yourself were something of a scapegrace in your youth. Just give our little birdie time to grow and you will see how beautiful he will become; he is the best of all my children."

Although my mother always took my part, she was not blind to the true state of affairs; she knew that all was not right, but she was my mother and a mother's heart goes out in sympathy to that child who has been wronged by nature, as if the fault were hers and she would ward off the stroke aimed at her offspring by cruel fate.

When the time for my first moulting came,

my father watched me with pensive interest. While my feathers were falling he treated me kindly enough, even offering me some food when he saw me shivering in naked helplessness in the corner; but when my poor benumbed pinions became covered with down and one white feather after another began to appear, he fell into such a rage that I feared he would pluck out all my feathers once for all. Alas! I had no mirror; I did not know the cause of that fury and I asked myself why the best of fathers should be so cruel.

One day when the bright sunlight was falling on my budding plumage, I felt in my heart such a deep sense of joy that, in spite of myself, I burst into song. At the first note my father leaped into the air as though he had been shot out of a gun.

"What is that I hear?" he cried; "is it thus a blackbird sings? Is that the way I sing? Do you call that singing?"

And swooping down on my mother with a frightful expression of wrath on his face he shrieked:

"Wretch! what is this you have hatched in my nest?"

At these words my outraged mother raised herself in her nest and tried to speak, but her sobs stifled all utterance; she fell to the ground in a fainting condition. I feared she was dying;

trembling with fear I threw myself at my father's feet.

"O my father!" I cried, "if my song displeases you, if I am not clad to your taste, let not my mother suffer for it! Is it her fault if nature has refused me such a voice as yours? Is it her fault if I have not your beautiful yellow beak and your fine black coat *à la Français* which makes you look like a churchwarden swallowing an omelet? If heaven has made me a monster and if some one must bear the blame, grant that I may be the only victim of your wrath!"

"That has nothing to do with it," said my father; "what has that to do with the absurd manner in which you have just attempted to sing? Who taught you to sing thus in defiance of all custom and all rules?"

"Alas! sir," I very humbly replied, "I sung as best I could, feeling somewhat merry because the weather was fine; perhaps, because I had eaten too many flies."

"Such singing as that is not permitted in my family," replied my father beside himself with rage. "For centuries we have sung from father to son and you should know that when I make my voice heard in the night there is an old fellow on the first floor and a young *grisette* in the attic who open their windows to listen. Is it not enough that I should have

before my eyes the frightful color of your dirty plumage which makes you look like a bedizened clown at the fair? If I were not the most pacific of blackbirds I would long ago have plucked you as bare as a dressed chicken."

"Very well," I replied, shocked at my father's injustice, "if that is the way matters stand, sir, I shall at once relieve you of my hated presence. I shall go away, I shall flee from your sight; other children will cheer your last days since my mother increases your family three times a year; I shall go far away and hide my misery, and perchance," I continued, sobbing, "I shall find in some neighboring gutter some worms or spiders on which to sustain my miserable life."

"As you please," replied my father, far from being moved by my words. "Let me never see you again! You are not my son, you are not a blackbird."

"And what am I then, if you please?"

"I am sure I do not know, but you are not a blackbird."

With these crushing words my father turned away. My mother sadly raised her head and I could see that her eyes were filled with tears. As for me, confused and disheartened, I directed my flight as best I could toward the gutter on the roof of a neighboring house.

II

My father was so cruel as to leave me several days in that mortifying situation. Despite occasional outbursts of passion he had a good heart and by the sidelong glances he cast toward me I could see that he was ready to pardon me and welcome me under the paternal bush; my mother continually raised her pitying eyes to my lofty perch and even dared to call to me in a plaintive, half fearful way; but I could see that my horrible white plumage inspired them with feelings of repugnance and even fright for which there was no remedy.

"I am not a blackbird?" I repeated one morning, and stepping to the edge of the gutter I examined my image reflected in the water and for the first time realized the fact that I differed from all the rest of my family. "O heaven!" I cried, "teach me what I am!"

One night when it was raining in torrents, exhausted with hunger and with sorrow, there lighted near me a bird more drenched with rain and more attenuated with hunger and fatigue than I. He was about my color, as far as I could judge looking at him through the blinding rain, and he had on his body hardly enough plumage to feather a sparrow, although he was larger than I. At the first glance he appeared

to be in most destitute circumstances, but in spite of the storm which beat about his head he maintained so proud a bearing that I was charmed with him. I modestly saluted him with a most respectful bow, to which he replied by a stroke of his beak which almost felled me to the ground. Seeing me scratch my ear and remove to a more respectful distance without making any attempt to reply to him in his own language, he addressed me in a voice as harsh as his head was bald.

"Who are you?"

"Alas! sir," I replied (fearing a second blow), "I do not know. I thought I was a blackbird but I have been convinced that I am not."

The singular nature of my reply together with my air of sincerity interested him. He drew closer to me and asked me to tell him the story of my life, which I did with all the sadness and humility which befitted the nature of that story and the wrath of the warring elements.

"If you were a ringdove like me," said he after listening to my story, "such trifles would not cause you a moment's uneasiness. We travel much, that is our life, we have our love adventures but we do not know who are our fathers. To cleave the air, to traverse space, to see at our feet mountains and plains, to breathe the azure of heaven itself, and not the

exhalations of earth, to move like a flash toward a point which never escapes us, such is our pleasure, such is our life. I go farther in one day than a man can go in ten."

"Upon my honor, sir," I replied, becoming more bold, "you are something of a Bohemian."

"I care nothing for that," he replied. "I have no country; I know but three things: travels, my wife and my little ones. Where my wife is, there is my country."

"But what have you there hung about your neck? It appears to be a cumpled piece of paper."

"Important papers," replied he, his neck swelling with pride; "I am on my way to Brussels and have certain letters for a celebrated banker which will affect the markets of the world."

"Heaven!" I cried, "what a fine life to lead! Brussels must be a curious village. Can you not take me with you? Since I am not a black-bird I may be a ringdove."

"If you were a ringdove," replied he "you would have returned that blow I dealt you a little while ago."

"Very well, sir, I will return it, let us not quarrel about such a little thing as that. The morning is coming on apace, the storm is subsiding. Kindly permit me to follow you. I am in despair, I have nothing to hope for here

—if you refuse me I have nothing to do but drown myself in this gutter."

"Very well, let us be off! Follow me if you can."

I cast a parting glance toward the garden where my mother was sleeping. A tear trickled down my cheek; the wind and the rain carried it away. I spread my wings and launched forth into space.

III

My wings, as I have said, were not yet strong. While my guide flew like the wind, I labored along at his side; I held my own for some time but I soon became so dizzy that I feared I was about to faint.

"Have we much farther to go?" I asked in a feeble voice.

"No, we are now at Bourget, we have only sixty leagues more to make."

I tried to pluck up my courage and prove myself something better than a wet hen; but at the end of another quarter of an hour I was completely exhausted.

"Sir," I stammered, "could you not stop just a moment? I am tormented with a terrible thirst, and a few minutes rest on a tree—"

"Go to the devil! you are nothing but a black-bird!" replied the ringdove in disgust.

And without deigning to turn his head he sped along in his mad flight. As for me, almost fainting with fatigue, I fluttered helplessly into a meadow.

I do not know how long I lay there in a fainting condition. When I recovered consciousness the first thing which occurred to my mind was the cruel taunt hurled at me by the ring-dove: "You are nothing but a blackbird!" O my dear parents, were you not mistaken? I shall return to you; you will recognize me as your legitimate child and you will give me my accustomed place in the leaves under my mother's nest.

I made an effort to rise, but the fatigue of my long flight and the shock of my fall paralyzed my limbs. As soon as I had gained my feet I tottered forward a few feet and then fell over on my side.

The horror of death seized me; I was about to close my eyes and resign myself to my fate when I saw two charming creatures approaching me on the tips of their toes. As they advanced through the violets and corn-poppies I saw that one of them was a little magpie very much speckled and decidedly coquettish, and the other a rose colored turtledove. The turtledove stopped a few paces from me with a charming expression of modesty and compassion for my

misfortune; but the magpie fluttered up to me in the most friendly manner imaginable.

"Poor child! what are you doing here?" she asked in playful tones of silvery sweetness.

"Alas! madame, the marchioness," I replied (for I supposed her title could be nothing less), "I am an unfortunate traveler dropped on the way by a faithless postilion and I am dying of hunger."

"Merciful heaven! is it possible?" she cried.

She immediately began to flit about here and there among the bushes which surrounded us, gathering berries and fruit which she heaped up in a little pile before me, questioning me the while.

"But who are you? Whence do you come? Your adventure seems incredible. And where are you going? Traveling alone, and so young, for I see you have just moulted for the first time! Who are your parents? Where do they live? How did you get into such a state? Why it is enough to make the feathers stand up on one's head!"

While she was talking I had managed to rise up on one side and was eating the food she had brought me with a zest born of long fasting. The turtledove continued to regard me with the same expression of sympathetic interest. From the way I turned my head from side to side she understood that I was thirsty.

Of the rain that had fallen during the night there remained a drop on a blade of chickweed; she timidly gathered that drop on the end of her beak and brought it to me. Certainly such reserve would never have melted into such kindly attention if I had not been very sick.

I did not yet know what love was but my heart began to beat violently. A prey to conflicting emotions, I was rapidly yielding to the spell which her presence seemed to throw over me. The manner in which I was served was so dainty, my little cup-bearer so sweet that I would fain have dined thus through all eternity. Unfortunately everything has its limits, even the appetite of a convalescent. The food disposed of and my strength restored, I satisfied the curiosity of the little magpie and recounted for her benefit the story of my misfortunes with as much sincerity as I had first confided them to the ringdove the evening before. The magpie listened with closer attention than I supposed her capable of and the turtledove gave me many charming proofs of her deep interest. But when I touched on the cause of all my woe, my ignorance of my own identity, the magpie could no longer restrain herself.

"Are you joking?" she cried; "you a black-bird! you a pigeon! Fie! you are a magpie, my dear child, and a very fine magpie indeed,"

she added giving me a gentle tap with her wing, in lieu of her fan.

"But it seems to me, madam, the marchion-
es," I replied, "that for a magpie I am of such
a color not to offend you—"

"A Russian magpie, my dear, you are a Rus-
sian magpie! Did you not know that they are
white? Poor fellow, how innocent!"

"But, madam," I resumed, "how could I be a
Russian magpie born as I was in Paris in an
old porringer near the Marais?"

"O my dear child, you are the offspring of
some migratory specimen of our race; did you
not know there were such? Trust yourself to
my care and I will show you the most beauti-
ful things in the world."

"Where, madam, if you please?"

"In my verdant palace, my darling; you shall
see the life I lead. You will not have been a
magpie more than a quarter of an hour before
you will determine to be a magpie forever. We
are one hundred in number; not coarse village
magpies who ask alms on the highway but all
nobles and merry comrades, small and chipper,
no larger than a man's fist. Each one of us has
seven black marks and five white marks; there
is no exception to this and we hold the rest of
the world in contempt. It is true you have no
black marks but your Russian origin will serve
to secure you admittance to our circle. Our

life consists in two things, cackling and strutting about. From morning till noon we are busy pluming our feathers, and from noon till night we cackle. Each one of us perches on a tree, the highest and oldest we can find. In the midst of the forest there towers a lofty oak, inhabited, alas! It was the dwelling-place of the late king Magpie X. whither we went on pilgrimages, heaving doleful sighs; but aside from this slight solemnity we pass the time most merrily. Our wives are not prudes, our husbands are not jealous; our pleasures are pure and simple because our hearts are as noble as our language is free and joyous. Our pride knows no limit, and if a jay or other vulgar bird happens to find his way into our circle we pluck him most pitilessly. But we are, notwithstanding, the best people in the world, and the sparrows, the tomtits and the goldfinches who live in our neighborhood find us the very best of friends and protectors. Nowhere is there so much cackling as with us, and nowhere so little slander. We are not lacking in pious old magpies who say their prayers all day long but the most thoughtless of our younger gossips need never fear a reproving peck from the severest old dowager. In a word we live for pleasure, honor, gossip, glory and dress."

"That is all very attractive, madam," I replied, "and I would be lacking in intelligent

appreciation if I should fail in respect for such a person as you. But before doing myself the honor of following your advice, kindly permit me to address a word to this amiable creature at your side. Mademoiselle," I continued, addressing myself to the turtledove, "answer me frankly, I beg of you; do you think I am really a Russian magpie?"

At that question the turtledove bowed her head and a light blush mantled her cheeks.

"Sir, I hardly know how to—"

"In heaven's name, speak! I have no thought of offending you, quite the contrary. You are both so sweet and so charming that I pledge my word I will offer my heart and foot to the one who will accept them the moment I know whether I am a magpie or something else; for in looking at you," I added lowering my voice and addressing the dove, "I feel within me a strange sense of affinity which torments me in a singular manner."

"But truly," replied the turtledove reddening still more. "I do not know whether it is the reflection of the sunlight falling on these poppies or whether it is due to some other cause, but your plumage seems to have a light tint—"

She did not dare go on.

"O perplexity!" I cried, "how am I to know what to believe? How can I give my heart to

either of you when it is so cruelly tortured. O Socrates! what an admirable precept you expressed for me when you said, 'Know thyself!'"

Since the day my unhappy song had so deeply offended my father I had not used my voice. At that moment it occurred to me to employ it as a means of learning the truth. "Since my father has disinherited me, on account of my first couplet," I mused, "it is certain that the second will produce some effect on these ladies!" Making a polite bow as though to bespeak the indulgence of my audience on account of the severe drenching I had received, I began to whistle, then to warble, then to trill, finally to sing with all my might like a Spanish muleteer in full swing.

As I sung the little magpie began to edge away with an air of surprise, which soon gave way to alarm mingled with profound ennui. She began to describe circles around me as a cat around a piece of hot meat which has just burned its tongue, but which it is as yet unwilling to abandon. Seeing the effect of my ruse and determined to push matters to the bitter end, the more impatient the poor marchioness became, the louder I sung. She resisted my melodious effusion for twenty-five minutes and then, unable to endure it longer she fled screaming with terror toward her ver-

dant palace. As for the turtledove she had fallen sound asleep from the first note.

"Admirable effect of harmony," thought I. "O native Marais! O maternal porringer! My heart goes out to thee!"

At the moment I was turning away the turtledove opened her eyes.

"Adieu," said she, "thou stranger so gentle and so tiresome! My name is Gourouli; remember me!"

"Beautiful Gourouli," I replied, "you are good, sweet and charming; I would fain live and die for you. But your color is that of the rose; so much happiness is not for me!"

IV

The mournful effect my singing had produced saddened me. "Alas! music, alas! poesy," I repeated on my way toward Paris, "how few there are who understand you!"

While absorbed in these reflections I knocked my head against that of a bird flying in the opposite direction. The shock was so sudden, so unexpected, that we both fell on the top of a tree which was fortunately just beneath us. When we had shaken ourselves a few times I looked at the newcomer expecting a quarrel. I noted with surprise that he was white. His

head was somewhat larger than mine and on his forehead there rested a kind of plume which gave him a mock-heroic appearance. Moreover he carried his tail bravely in the air; and yet he did not seem to be inclined to offer battle. We approached each other and began to apologize for the unfortunate shock which had attended our first meeting. I took the liberty to ask his name and country.

"I am astonished," said he, "that you do not know me. Are you not one of us?"

"To tell the truth, sir," I replied, "I do not know what I am. Everyone asks me and tells me the same thing; I must be a wagger some one has made."

"You are surely joking," he made answer; "your plumage becomes you too well for me to fail to recognize you as a brother. You certainly belong to that illustrious and venerable race known in Latin as *cacuata*, to the savants as *kakatoës*, and in vulgar parlance cockatoo."

"Indeed, sir, it is possible and the idea flatters my pride. But let us pretend that I am not and deign to tell me to whom I have the honor of speaking."

"I am," replied the unknown, "the great poet Kockatoolah. I have made redoubtable journeys and I have suffered the hardships of cruel peregrinations. I have been making rhymes for many years and my muse has seen unhappy

days. I have hummed under Louis XVI., twittered for the Republic, nobly sung the praises of the Empire, discreetly praised the Restoration, I have even done something for these latter days but have submitted, not without sorrow, to the exigencies of this tasteless generation. I have launched into the world piquant distiches, sublime hymns, graceful dithyrambs, pious elegies, hairy dramas, woolly romances, powdered ballads and baldheaded tragedies. In a word I can pride myself on having decked the temple of the Muses with some festive garlands, some sombre arches and some ingenious arabesques. But now, although I am grown old, I still compose verdant rhymes and I was just thinking over a new poem in one canto which was to have not less than six pages, when you knocked me on the head. If I can do anything for you I am at your service."

"Indeed, sir, you can do something for me for I am at this very moment in great poetic embarrassment. I dare not say I am a poet, much less a great poet such as you," I added with a polite bow, "but nature has endowed me with a gullet that longs to be in action when I am feeling good or when I am in trouble. To tell the truth I am completely ignorant of all rules."

"I have forgotten them," said Kockatoolah; "do not worry about that."

"But I am compelled to admit," I resumed, "that my voice produces on those who hear it the same effect as that of Jean de Neville on— You know what I wish to say?"

"I know," said Kockatoolah; "I, too, have noticed that strange effect. The cause is unknown, but the fact is incontestable."

"But, sir, you who seem to be the Nestor of poetry, do you not know some remedy for it?"

"No," said Kockatoolah, "for my part I have never been able to find any. In my youth I was sorely troubled because of the hisses which greeted my efforts to please, but now I think nothing of it. I consider that repugnance due to the fact that the public have read other writers than us and that distracts their attention."

"I agree with you; but, sir, you must confess that it is hard for one whose intentions are good to put people to flight when he would charm them with his voice. Will you kindly listen to me and give me your advice?"

"Very willingly," replied Kockatoolah; "I am all ears."

I immediately began to sing and had the satisfaction of seeing that Kockatoolah neither tried to escape nor went to sleep. He regarded me fixedly and from time to time nodded his head with approbation, giving vent to a kind of murmur of approval. But I soon perceived that he was not listening to me and that he

was thinking of his poem. Profiting by a moment's pause in which I was taking breath, he interrupted me.

"I have found it, I have found that rhyme," said he, smiling and shaking his head; "it is the sixty thousand seven hundred and fourteenth which has come from this head of mine! And yet they dare to say that I am growing old! I am going to read that to my good friends, I am going to read it to them and we shall see what they will say!"

Speaking thus he took flight and disappeared, apparently forgetting that he had ever met me.

V

Alone and disappointed I had nothing better to do than to resume my flight toward Paris. Unfortunately I did not know my route. My journey with the pigeon had been too swift to admit of careful examination of the route. So instead of turning to the right, I turned to the left at Bourget and, night coming on apace, I was compelled to seek shelter in the forest of Morfontaine.

Everyone was asleep when I arrived. The magpies and jays who, as everyone knows, are the poorest sleepers in the world, were wrangling and bickering on all sides. In the bushes the sparrows were twittering angrily and hop-

ping about one over the other. In the water near the edge of the stream gravely stalked two herons, perched on their long legs in the attitude of meditation. Enormous ravens, half asleep, sailed lazily above the tops of the loftiest trees, crooning their evening prayers. Lower down the amorous tomtits were twittering busily in the copse, while a belated woodpecker pushed his entire household out the back door in his frantic efforts to enter his home in a hollow tree. Phalanxes of sparrows were constantly arriving from the fields, dancing through the air like puffs of smoke and settling down on some bushes which they completely covered; finches, fauvettes, robin redbreasts, were grouped together on the lower branches like crystals on a girandole. On every side voices could be heard calling:—"Come, wife!"—"Come, my daughter!"—"Here I am, my dear!"—"This way, my love!"—"Good evening, sweet mistress!"—"Adieu, my friends!"—"Sleep well, my little ones!"

What an embarrassing situation for a celibate, obliged to put up in such an inn! I decided to look for some birds who resembled me in form and ask permission to enjoy their hospitality. "In the night time," thought I, "all birds are gray and what harm would it do to ask them to grant me the privilege of sleeping at a respectful distance from them?"

I first directed my steps toward a ditch where some starlings were gathered. They were making their toilet for the night with great care and I remarked that most of them had gilded wings and polished claws: they were the dandies of the forest. They were nice enough children and they did not honor me with any attention, but their conversation was so vain and empty, they recited with so much fatuity their quarrels and their adventures, their general intercourse was marked by such stupid vapidty that it was impossible for me to endure their company.

I immediately flew away and perched on a branch occupied by a half dozen birds of different varieties. I modestly appropriated the last place at the extremity of the branch, hoping that would suffice for me. Unfortunately my neighbor was an old dove as dry as a rusty weather-vane. At the time of my arrival the few feathers which decked her body were the objects of her particular solicitude; she pretended to be pluming herself but she was too much afraid of losing one of her feathers to indulge in an elaborate toilet; she merely passed them in review to assure herself that they were all there. No sooner had I alighted on the bough beside her than she drew herself up in the most majestic manner.

"What are you doing here, sir?" said she

pursing up her beak with severe British prudery.

With these words she dealt me a blow with her beak that knocked me from my perch as though I had been struck by a hammer.

I fell into the grass near a hazel hen. My mother herself, in her domestic porringer, had no sweeter air of maternal benignity. She was so soft and plump, so comfortably seated on her triple stomach that one would have taken her for a *paté* of which the crust had been eaten. I stole gently, almost furtively, to her side. "She will not waken," I said to myself, "and even if she does such a nice fat mamma could not be unkind." And she was not. She half opened her eyes and said to me as she heaved a gentle sigh:

"You disturb me, my little one," said she; "please go away."

At the same moment I heard some one calling to me; it was some thrushes up in a sorb tree who were motioning me to come to them. "At last I have found some good companions," thought I. They made room for me smiling the while like little fools and I settled myself in this feathery group as snugly as a *billet-doux* in a sleeve. But I was not long in discovering that these ladies had been eating more grapes than were good for them; they could hardly hold on to the branches on which

they were perched and their questionable jests, their bursts of laughter and their improper songs compelled me to leave them.

I was beginning to despair and was searching for some solitary spot in which to sleep, when a nightingale broke into song. Everyone listened. Alas! how sweet and pure her voice! How touching her melancholy! Far from troubling the repose of others her delicious melody seemed rather to rock the cradle of dreams. No one thought of interrupting her song, no one took offense that she should sing at such an hour; her father did not beat her, her friends did not take flight.

"Then I am the only one to whom happiness is denied," I muttered. "I shall go away, I shall flee this cruel world. I would better resume my lonely flight at the risk of being swallowed by some owl, than allow myself to be thus tortured by the sight of the happiness of others!"

With that thought uppermost in my mind I resumed my flight and wandered about for some time without knowing where I was going. By the first gleams of the morning sun, I spied the towers of Notre Dame. In the twinkling of an eye I had reached the spot and had soon sighted the garden in which I was born. I flew toward it like a flash—Alas! it was empty! In vain I called on my parents; no one replied. The tree on which my father was accustomed to

perch, the maternal bush, the cherished porringer, all had disappeared. The ax had destroyed the last vestige of the home of my youth ; in the place of the green covert in which I was born there remained only a bundle of fagots.

VI

I began to search for my parents in the gardens around about, but in vain; they had doubtless sought a new home in some distant quarter and I could find no trace of them.

A victim to the deepest melancholy I perched on the gutter to which I had been banished by my father's wrath. I passed entire days and nights deploring my sad state. I could not sleep, I could hardly eat; I was ready to die from grief.

One day I was thus lamenting my fate :

"So I am not a blackbird since my father disinherits me ; nor a pigeon since I fell exhausted on the route to Brussels; nor a Russian magpie since the little marchioness stopped her ears as soon as I opened my beak ; nor a turtle-dove since Gourouli, the tender Gourouli herself, snored like a monk while I was singing; nor a cuckatoo since Kockatoolah would not deign to listen to me; nor any kind of bird whatsoever since I was obliged to sleep alone

at Morfontaine. And yet I have feathers on my body; here are claws and here are wings. I am not a monster since Gourouli, and even the little marchioness, found me to their taste. Owing to what inexplicable mystery do these feathers, these wings and these claws refuse to form an ensemble to which a name may be ascribed? May I not perchance be——" I was about to continue my doleful reflections when I was interrupted by a dispute between two porters down in the street.

"Will you never cease your senseless twaddle? Do you want me to make you a present of a white blackbird?"

"Just heavens!" I cried, "that is what I am! O, Providence! I am the son of a blackbird and I am white! I am a white blackbird!"

That discovery, I must confess, led me to change my views concerning myself. Instead of continuing my sad complaints I began to swell with pride, and marched proudly up and down the gutter with the air of a conqueror.

"It is something to be merely a white blackbird," said I; "white blackbirds are not found everywhere. I did well to moan because I could not find my like among the haunts of birds; that is the lot of genius, and it is mine! Then I wished to flee from the world, now I wish to astonish it! Since I am that rare bird whose existence is denied by the vulgar I ought

to comport myself as becomes my distinguished position, and, like the phœnix, I should look down upon all other winged creatures. I must buy the memoirs of Alfieri and the poems of Lord Byron; that substantial nourishment will inspire me with noble pride; without counting what God has given me. Yes, I wish to add, if possible, to the prestige of my birth. Nature has made me rare, I will make myself mysterious. It will be esteemed a favor, it will be glory merely to see me. And," I added in a low tone, "what if I should consent to show myself for money?"

"Fie! what an unworthy thought! I will write a poem, not like Kockatoolah in one canto, but in twenty-four like all great poets; that is not enough, there shall be forty-eight, with notes and an appendix! The universe must be informed that I exist. In my verses I will not fail to deplore my isolation; but in such a manner that the happiest shall envy me. Since heaven has refused me a mate, I will say all manner of evil of the sex, I will prove that everything is too green except the grapes which I eat. The nightingales must look out for themselves; I will demonstrate that as two and two make four their plaintive melodies corrupt the heart and that their songs are worthless. I must call on Charpentier. I wish to win a powerful literary position. I expect to have

about me a court composed not only of journalists, but of authors and even of women of letters. I will create a rôle for Mlle. Rachel, and if she refuses to play it, I will have it proclaimed abroad that her talent is inferior to that of some old actress from the provinces. I will go to Venice and I will take possession of the beautiful palace of Mocenigo on the banks of the grand canal, in the midst of that fairy city; that palace shall cost me a hundred francs a day; there I will become inspired with all the memories which the author of *Tara* must have left there. From the midst of my solitude I will inundate the world with a flood of miscellaneous rhymes, modeled after the strophe of Spencer; there I will solace my heart, I will make all the tomtits sigh, all the turtledoves warble for love, all the woodcocks melt into tears, and all the old owls hoot in derision. But as far as my person is concerned I will be inexorable and inaccessible to love. In vain shall they urge me, beg me to have pity on the unfortunates who have been seduced by my sublime music, to all I will reply with scorn and contempt. O excess of glory! my manuscripts will be worth their weight in gold, my books will cross the seas; renown and fortune will follow me everywhere; alone in the crowd which surrounds me I will remain indifferent to its murmurs. In a word, I will be a perfect

white blackbird, a veritable eccentric man of letters, fêted, petted, admired, envied, ut an unmitigated and insufferable grumbler.

VII

Only six weeks were required to bring out my first work. It was as I had determined a poem in forty-eighth cantos. There were some evidences of carelessness in my work owing to the wealth of ideas with which it was burdened. But I reflected that the public of to-day, accustomed to the fine literature printed at the bottom of daily papers would not reproach me on that account.

My success was instantaneous and unequalled. The subject of my work was myself; in that I followed the mode of the time. I recounted the story of my past sufferings with charming fatuity; I placed before the reader a thousand domestic details of the most piquant interest; the description of my mother's porringer required fourteen cantos for adequate treatment; I took account of the furrows, the holes, the dents, the broken places, the splinters, the nails, the spots, the various colors, the reflections; I showed the outside, the inside, the rim, the bottom, the "sides, the inclined plane, the general plan; passing to the contents I studied

the blades of grass, the straws, the dry leaves, the little pieces of wood, the gravel, the drops of water, the debris of flies, the remains of cockchafers which were found within; it was a description of absorbing interest. But do not suppose that I put all this together in one spot; if I had done so there would have been impertinent readers who would have skipped it. I skilfully cut it up into convenient morsels and scattered these bits through the work in such a way that nothing was lost; so it came to pass that at the most interesting and dramatic moments there would occur some fifteen pages of porringer. This arrangement is, I think, one of the great secrets of art, and as I am not avaricious let him profit by it who will.

All Europe was stirred by the appearance of my book; she devoured the intimate revelations which I had deigned to communicate. How could it have been otherwise? Not only did I enumerate many events in my past life, but I gave to the public a general picture of all the dreams that had passed through this head since the age of two months; I even interpolated, at the most beautiful spot in one of the cantos, an ode composed in my shell. Of course I did not neglect the great subject which occupies so much of the world's attention; the future of the human family. The problem appeared interesting to me; I sketched, in a mo-

ment of leisure, a solution which is generally accepted as satisfactory.

Everyday I received compliments in verse, letters of congratulation, and anonymous declarations of love. As for society, I rigorously followed the plan I had outlined; my door was closed to all the world. I could not avoid admitting two foreigners who were announced as relatives of mine. One was a blackbird from Senegal, the other a blackbird from China.

"O! sir," said they, embracing me to the point of suffocation, "what a great blackbird you are! How well you have portrayed, in your immortal poem, the profound suffering of unrecognized genius! If we were not already as much misunderstood as possible, we would become more so after having read your work. How we sympathize with your sorrows, with your sublime contempt for all that is vulgar! We, too, know for ourselves the secret sorrows you have sung! Here are two sonnets we have written, the one suggesting the other, and we beg you will accept them."

"Here is the other," added the Chinese blackbird, "to the music composed by my wife on a passage in your preface. It expresses with marvelous fidelity the intention of the author."

"Sirs," I replied, "as far as I am able to judge, you seem to be endowed with warm hearts and exalted understandings. But pardon me if

I ask a question. Whence comes your extreme melancholy?"

"Ah! sir," replied the inhabitant of Senegal, "behold how I am made. My plumage, it is true, is agreeable enough to the sight, and I am adorned with this beautiful green color sometimes seen on ducks, but my beak is too short and my foot is too large; and see what a tail I am provided with! My body is only two-thirds of my total length. Is that not enough to induce melancholy?"

"And I, sir," said the Chinese blackbird, "am still more unfortunate. The tail of my confrere sweeps the ground; but children point their fingers at me because I have none at all."

"Sirs," I replied, "I pity you with all my heart; it is always embarrassing to have too much or too little of anything. But permit me to tell you that there are at the Jardin des Plantes several specimens which resemble you and which have been there some time, securely impaled. As the fact that a woman of letters is immoral and shameless does not necessarily fit her to produce a good book, so discontent in a blackbird is not a sure index of genius. I am the only one of my kind, and I bewail the fact; perhaps I do wrong, but it is my right. I am white, my dear sirs; become such as I and we will see what you have to say."

VIII

In spite of the resolution I had taken and the calm I had affected, I was not happy. My isolation, although glorious, was none the less irksome, and I could not look calmly on the prospect of living all my life a celibate. The return of spring, in particular, caused me the most poignant suffering and I was ready to give way to despair when an unforeseen circumstance changed my course of life.

It goes without saying that my writings had crossed the Channel and that the English had accorded them an eager welcome. The English welcome everything in this way, except what they understand. One day I received from London a letter signed by a young blackbird.

"I have seen your poem," it read, "and the admiration I have conceived for the author has led me to decide to offer you my hand and fortune. God has created us for each other! I am your equal for I am a white blackbird."

One may easily imagine my surprise and joy. A white blackbird! Is it possible? I am not, then, the only one on earth! I hastened to reply to the fair unknown and I did so in a manner which gave evidence of the pleasure with which I entertained her proffer. I urged her to come at once to Paris or permit me to fly to

her. She replied that she preferred to come to me as her parents might object to the union; that she would put her affairs in order, and that I should soon see her.

She arrived, in fact, some days later. O joy! she was the most beautiful blackbird in the world and even whiter than I.

"Ah! mademoiselle," I cried, "or rather madam, for I look upon you as my legitimate wife from this moment, is it possible that such a charming creature as you can have lived on this earth and her existence have been unknown to me? Blessed be the sorrow I have known, the cruelty I have suffered, since heaven has reserved for me a solace so sweet! Up to this day I believed that I was condemned to eternal solitude, and, to be frank with you, it was a heavy burden to bear; but I feel within me as I look upon you, all the qualities of a father of a family. Accept my hand without delay; let us marry without ceremony after the English custom, and let us set out for Switzerland."

"I prefer," replied my betrothed, "that our wedding should be magnificent, and that all the blackbirds in France who happen to be of good birth should be solemnly assembled for the occasion. People such as we owe it to our glory not to wed like cats in the gutter. I have brought with me a supply of banknotes. Make out your invitations, order whatever may be

necessary and do not spare the refreshments."

I yielded blind obedience to her wishes. Our nuptials were celebrated with imposing magnificence; a thousand flies were consumed at the wedding feast. We received the nuptial blessing of the reverend father, Cormoran, who was arch-bishop *in partibus*. A superb ball followed; my happiness was complete.

The more familiar I became with the character of my charming wife, the more my love increased. She combined, in her little self, all the attractive qualities of body and soul. It is true she was a little prudish, but I attributed that to the influence of the English fog in which she had lived up to that time and I did not doubt but that the climate of France would soon dissipate that slight cloud.

A thing that troubled me more seriously was the air of mystery with which she locked herself in her room with her maids, passing thus entire hours at her toilet, as she pretended. Husbands do not like such whims in their household. I would knock at my wife's door twenty times before I could gain admission. That made me very impatient. One day I insisted on her opening the door with so much feeling that she consented with more promptness than usual, not without complaining of my importunity. As I entered I observed on the table a large bottle of white paste made of

Spanish flour. I asked my wife what she was doing with that preparation; she replied that she used it to relieve the pain she suffered from chilblains.

That explanation was not altogether satisfactory; but how could I bring myself to suspect so sweet and so intelligent a creature, who had given herself to me with such sincerity and in such good faith? I did not know at first that my wife was herself literary until she confessed it and showed me a manuscript in which she had imitated both Walter Scott and Scarron. You may readily imagine the pleasure such a proof of my wife's versatility gave me. Not only was I the possessor of an incomparable beauty, but I also learned that my companion's intelligence was in every respect worthy of my genius. From that moment we worked together. While I was writing my poems, she was scribbling away on large sheets of paper. I recited my verses aloud, but that did not interfere with her work. She hatched romances with as much facility as I myself could boast, always choosing the most dramatic subjects, parricides, rapes, murders, even petty larceny, always taking care to attack the government and to preach the doctrine of universal freedom for all blackbirds. In a word no effort seemed to tax her mind, no achievement exhausted her marvelous fecundity; she never erased a single line or

made any plan before setting to work. She was the type of the lettered blackbird.

One day while she was working with unusual ardor, I observed that she was shedding great drops of perspiration, and at the same time I was astonished to behold a large black spot on her back.

"My dear what is this?" I inquired. "Are you ill?"

At first she appeared a little frightened, almost sheepish; but her knowledge of life and her experience in society enabled her promptly to resume control of herself. She told me that it was a spot of ink which always appeared there in moments of inspiration.

"Is it possible that my wife is fading, that she is losing her color?" I asked myself in a low voice. That thought troubled my sleep. The bottle of white paste suddenly presented itself to my fevered imagination. "O heaven!" I cried, "what a suspicion! Is it possible that this divine creature is nothing but a painter, a colorist? Has she tricked herself up in this way to deceive me? When I thought I was pressing to my heart the sister of my soul, the privileged being created especially for me, have I married nothing but a sack of flour?"

Tormented by this horrible suspicion I formed a plan that would either confirm or dispel it. I bought a barometer and waited eagerly for a

rainy day. I wished to take my wife to the country some stormy day and try the effect of washing on her color. But it was the middle of July and the weather was disgustingly fine. The appearance of happiness and the habit of writing had excited my sensibilities to the point of acuteness. I was so constituted that in my work the sentiment was stronger than the idea and I often fell to weeping while waiting for a rhyme. My wife always enjoyed these exhibitions of weakness on my part; masculine frailty always delights feminine pride. One night as I was filing an erasure, according to the precept of Boileau, it happened that my heart overflowed.

"O thou!" I began, addressing my cherished companion, "thou only object of my love! Thou, without whom life would be a dream, thou whose smile changed for me the face of the universe, life of my heart, do you know how I love thee? To put into verse some hackneyed idea already used by some other poet would be an easy matter; but how shall I express the lofty sentiments with which thy beauty inspires me? Even the recollection of my past sorrows furnishes me with no word with which to describe my present joy. Before thou camest to me, my isolation was that of an exiled orphan; to-day it is that of a king. In this feeble body which I inhabit until the hand of death shall

bid me hence, in this little brain where ferment futile thoughts, canst thou understand my dear, canst thou realize my beautiful one, that there is nothing which does not belong to thee? Listen to what my brain can say and learn that my love is greater, thou glorious! O, that my genius were a pearl and thou wert Cleopatra!"

Raving thus, I shed tears on my wife and she lost color rapidly. At each tear I shed there appeared a feather, not exactly black, but rather a dull red. (I know not what other colors she had used.) After several minutes of tenderness I had before me a bird altogether discolored and defloured, identically the same as the every day blackbirds of the fields.

What could I do? What could I say? Reproaches seemed vain. It is true I might have construed her conduct as a forfeiture of all her claims and thus have the marriage set aside; but how could I thus publish my shame? Was not my cup of bitterness already full? I took my courage in both claws, I resolved to quit the world, to abandon my career, to flee to the desert, to avoid, if possible, the society of every living creature, and like Alceste to seek,

—Some lonely spot,
Where even white blackbirds may cast their lot.

IX

I set out with streaming eyes; and the wind, which is the chance of birds, wafted me to Morfontaine. This time all were asleep. "What a marriage!" I mused. "What deception! And yet it is certain that poor creature tricked herself out in that way with the very best intentions; but I am none the less grieved and she none the whiter."

The nightingale was still singing. Alone in the night, he exulted over that divine possession which rendered him superior to all poets and gave freely of his thought to the silence which surrounded him.

"How happy you are," said I to him; "not only do you sing as much as you choose, and very well, but all the world listens; but you have a wife and children, your nest, your friends, a soft pillow of moss, the full moon by night and no days. Rubini and Rossini are not to be compared with you, you surpass both. I, too, have sung, and it was pitiful. I have ranged words in line like Prussian soldiers, and I have composed silly trifles while you were singing in the woods. What is your secret? Can it be learned by others?"

"Yes," replied the nightingale, "but it is not what you suppose it to be. My wife is a tire-

some creature and I am in love with the rose ; Sadi the Pèrsian has spoken of it. I warble all night for her, but she sleeps and does not hear me. Her chalice is closed at this very moment, and within it there is an old beetle—and to-morrow morning, when I shall seek my couch for repose, exhausted with suffering and fatigue, then will she open her petals and a bee will eat out her heart!"



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